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STORIES OF THE STONE AGE

STORIES OF THE STONE AGE

A BOY'S LIFE IN 16,000 B.C.

By

EDWARD COLTON FELLOWES



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AN ENEMY IN THE DARK

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CHAPTER I

AN ENEMY IN THE DARK

UP in the branches of the big tree something moved, making an unusual commotion among the leaves. It was growing too dark in the woods to see very clearly, although out in the open at the edge of the forest daylight still lingered; and what sort of creature made this disturbance it was hard to tell. Perhaps a squirrel, or some large bird going to roost for the night, was responsible for it; but there was something stealthy about the movements, suggesting that the creature might be trying to hide from an enemy. It seemed to be endeavoring to escape notice. All of a sudden through an opening in the foliage a face peeped out—the face of a man. Keenly he glanced in all directions; then, as though satisfied that there was no further need of precaution, he stepped boldly out upon one of the larger limbs of the tree; when it might be seen that he was, after all, not a man, but a boy.

Long hair, roughly trimmed, hung down in heavy locks about his face, reaching almost to his shoulders, and every now and then he gave his head an impatient jerk, to throw it back from his eyes. Holding himself upright upon the tree-limb by grasping a bough, he peered frowningly down into the gathering dusk below.

This boy might have been about twelve years old, and seemed strong and well built, with muscular arms and legs.

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He wore a rough garment of skins, fastened in at the waist by means of a thong, and gathered up over the left shoulder by a sort of shoulder-strap. This garment hung skirt-fashion almost to the knees, leaving legs and arms free; and it could be seen, even in the dim light, that legs, arms and face, as well as that part of his upper body which was exposed, were all tanned to a deep brown.

His feet were large, and he grasped the limb upon which he stood with long flexible toes. Holding by the tree with one hand, he clutched in the other, like a club, a dead branch which he had broken off when he took refuge in the tree from a fancied enemy.

This boy's name was Ruig. He lived in a camp about a mile away from the woods, near the river. He did not often venture quite so far away from home at nightfall, for there were a good many animals which came out then, and it was by no means safe for a grown man, even, to be out alone, to say nothing of a boy. But Ruig was very fond of hunting, and had followed up with his bone-tipped javelin some small game which led him to the edge of the woods before he knew it. It was just as he looked up, and realized that he was almost among the trees, that he received the fright which caused him to climb one of them for safety.

This fright of Ruig's had been brought about in a peculiar way. He had seen nothing alarming, nor had his ears detected any unusual sound in the distance. That there was some large animal, however, not far away, he was sure; for his keen sense of smell had caught on the light breeze which stirred the leaves above him an unmistakable odor. As Ruig, bending down from his tree-limb, looked and listened, his nostrils wrinkled themselves as he tried again to detect the taint upon the air; but thus far he had not succeeded; and his fright

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began to give way to wonder and curiosity. He even debated for a moment whether to descend from his perch and get possession of his javelin, which he had dropped somewhere in the grass; but upon reflection he decided that it was not worth the risk, for the weapon was too small to be effective against any large animal; and besides, he was probably safe enough just by being in his tree—for none of the large animals, with the exception of the bear and the tiger, could climb a tree even if they tried. The bear, Ruig knew, was of a peaceable disposition, and would generally mind its own business unless attacked, or when it had cubs with it; while the tiger, magnificent as he appeared with his striped flanks, was at heart a coward, always sneaking away and trying to escape; and would never be likely to take to a tree unless cornered.

Thus Ruig argued himself out of his fears, although he still grasped his club, and strained all his senses to find out if he could what animal it was which was so near.

There were not many of the larger animals which Ruig had himself seen; but his father and the other men had often described them, in their talks about hunting, as they sat around the camp-fire at night; and he had seen pictured representations of them many a time, drawn upon the rocks by the artists of the tribe, or carved and etched upon the weapons of the hunters themselves. There was no part of spear-head or harpoon, dart-thrower or baton of office, which had not its decorations, most spirited and true to life, showing the ibex, chamois, wild ox or reindeer—with now and then a pigeon or a hawk for variety. Ruig thus knew the cave-bear, with his thick muffling of heavy fur, and his awkward shambling gait; and the mean-looking hyena, with his bad-tempered face and his disproportionately high fore-shoulders. He knew the wolf, of course, and the giant deer, with his stately head

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held high. He knew the saber-toothed tiger, with his terrible tusks; he had more than once come across the wild boar rooting for acorns under the trees along the edge of the woods. But there were two great beasts which Ruig was eager to see in the flesh, yet which he scarcely hoped ever to lay eyes on—the mammoth and the woolly rhinoceros. These animals were growing scarce, and with changes in the climate were continually migrating farther toward the north. Few of the hunters themselves, with the exception of some of the older men, had ever killed one of these beasts; for all such reasons Ruig was the more anxious to get one look at them, even in the distance; and now, as he bent over to spy through the foliage of his tree, it was with a mixture of anticipation and dread, which caused delicious shivers to travel up and down his spine. He hoped with all his might that one of these monsters would make its appearance, and pass close enough to his tree for him to see it plainly before it became too dark. He was morally certain that one or the other it must be, the scent of which had come to him on the breeze—for only so huge a beast could have so strong an odor.

Ruig remembered now that he had noticed a sort of beaten path, or trail, among the trees. At the time, he had not given it much thought; but now, the idea came to him that this trail might mark the regular route of one of these monsters as it went to and fro, to its feeding-ground, or to some pool where it went to drink. Along this track it might come at any moment; and all at once there reached him again upon the breeze the scent of the great coarse body. As he strained his ears, he could faintly distinguish the heavy soft tread of the thing as it drew nearer and nearer his hiding place. Now he could make out a huge bulk moving among the trees, and looming larger every moment. Ruig's heart pounded like a

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hammer, and he almost fell from his perch as he leaned breathlessly downward to get a good look at the gigantic beast. The mammoth! it was surely the mammoth! He could make out now the gleam of the great curling tusks. He could see the fat bunchy head, which gave the creature an indescribably foolish expression. The short powerful legs, with their splaying feet, supported the enormous bulk of the body like squat pillars under a mediæval tower; and strange to say, although the ground shook under the weight of the beast, it stepped along the forest floor as lightly as an elk or a chamois. Nearer and nearer came the mammoth. Now it was right under the tree. It was a veritable mountain of flesh, clad in its heavy overcoat of wool, the longer hair on the outside hanging down like a fringe along the great flanks. Directly beneath Ruig's branch the creature passed, and he stood glaring down upon it, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

But after having gone a few steps past the tree, suddenly the mammoth stopped in its tracks. It swung its great head from side to side with an air of suspicion; it grumbled in its throat; it raised its trunk aloft with a snuffling noise. Ruig knew. The breeze which had previously brought its scent to him, now brought his scent to the mammoth; and it was both puzzled and alarmed.

At once Ruig crept along his branch until he was close to the trunk of the tree, and then worked himself around it squirrel-fashion, until the bole was between him and the mammoth. He then quickly climbed several feet higher, for he did not know the reach of the beast's proboscis, and he had no wish to be plucked out of the branches like an apple, and then flattened into the earth under the knees of the enraged monster, like a hunter of whom he had heard. But for the present at least the mammoth was making no move. It stood

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perfectly still, listening and looking. He could see its huge bulk against the twilight sky, for it had almost reached the open when it had been halted by the tell-tale scent. Perhaps it was planning to rush his tree, and try either to uproot it by its great weight, or to shake him out of it like a chestnut. He imagined its little angry eyes fixed upon him, for it had now turned around, facing in his direction. Breathlessly Ruig awaited its charge; but still the mammoth did not stir. It might have been rooted to the spot. Perhaps in that great chuckle-head there was a dull brain, in which ideas moved heavily; or perhaps there was a low cunning there, which would try to outwit the enemy, waiting for him to make the first move so as to betray his exact whereabouts. If that were it, Ruig could wait as long as the mammoth, for he too knew tricks which hunters use. If on the other hand the beast was merely stupid, there was even less cause for fear, as he would find a way to puzzle it, slipping away to leeward while it was snuffling for him up wind.

But suddenly the mammoth gave an abrupt snort. It crashed away among the bushes as though it was making off—then stopped again. It uttered a loud trumpeting call which resounded through the woods. This might be a challenge; yet to Ruig's ears there was in it a note of fear. Why should this huge beast, largest of living creatures, be afraid of anything? What could possibly harm it? Only one thing could Ruig think of which might give it cause for alarm. Arguing from his own experience, it might be that the mysterious and the unknown could strike terror to the heart of the mammoth as to that of other creatures, including man. Perhaps the beast had never before smelt the scent of a human being. Arrested by the novelty of the sensation, it had been held for a while by curiosity. As time passed, however, curiosity changed to

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fear, since the mammoth could neither see nor hear the creature from which the strange scent came.

A second time the mammoth uttered its loud trumpeting cry; and now there could be no room for doubt; for even as it sounded the warning note, the mammoth wheeled, and went thundering away with amazing speed toward the open prairie.

Long after it had emerged from the forest, Ruig could hear its foot-beats on the hard ground until they finally died away in the distance. When he could no longer discern them, he slipped down from his tree, felt around in the grass at its foot until he found his javelin; scampered swiftly out beyond the forest edge; circled around a few times, sniffing the wind; and then darted off at full speed in spite of the darkness, as though he knew exactly where he was going.

Ruig had smelt the wood-smoke from the village fires a mile away, and was making for home.

RUIG AT HOME

CHAPTER II

RUIG AT HOME

RUIG'S home was a hut, one of perhaps twenty which made up the camp, built in an irregular group upon the prairie, and of various sizes and styles. Some were circular in shape, going up almost to a point, like an enormous beehive. These were covered with skins, upon a framework of saplings, the butts of which were firmly planted in the ground, while the tips were all brought together at the top, and fastened securely with a thong.

Inside the hut, the earth was excavated to the depth of a couple of feet, the soil which had thus been removed being piled up outside around the base of the saplings, like a sort of low wall or breastwork, leaving one narrow opening in front at the entrance, while a trench running clear around next the breastwork carried off the drainage water. These dwellings were very cool and pleasant in summertime, while in winter they were cosy and comfortable except in the coldest months, when the family would move to the caves in the cliff back of the village until spring once more came round.

Ruig's home, however, was different from that which has just been described. It was square, not circular, in shape. The interior was dug out and the earth piled up around the outside as in the case of the beehive dwelling; but the framework upon which the skin covering was stretched was much more solid and workmanlike than that of the lodge of poles. In the center at both front and rear of the hut, a stout young tree was planted firmly in the ground, rising to the height of

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about six feet, each post having a crotch at the top so that a sapling could be laid across to form the ridgepole. Slanting up to this ridgepole from either side, their butts sunk in the earthen breastwork, other smaller saplings rested, about six inches apart, the whole structure exactly resembling the skeleton of a barn roof. Saplings and ridgepole were lashed together with thongs, and the slanting surfaces covered with hides, while larger skins at front and rear served as curtains, which could be drawn aside or closed as occasion required.

There was no fireplace or hearth in any of these huts; but outside in the open air a small fire was kept going; it being the duty of the women to see that there were always live embers in the ashes, which could be easily blown into a flame.

Inside the hut which was Ruig's home were rude shake-downs of rushes covered with skins, which served as beds for the family. Stubs had been purposely left on the posts at front and rear, upon which weapons and garments might be hung. Spears belonging to Ruig's father leaned against one of the posts, and near by hung a skin bag or wallet, containing the fire-making implements always carried by the hunter, together with flint tools for repairing broken weapons, or for skinning animals which had been brought down in the chase. In this wallet were also spare arrowheads and javelin points. On one of the couches lay a beautifully carved dart-thrower; and near by on the floor stood a stone, rudely hollowed like a shallow bowl, holding a few spoonfuls of oil in which floated a wick of braided grasses—a primitive lamp which yielded a flickering and uncertain light. A similar stone, hollowed somewhat more deeply, with a stone pestle lying in it, was the mortar in which wild grain was ground.

Hanging from the ridgepole of the hut was a second wallet, more carefully made than the hunter's bag, and somewhat

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smaller in size. This contained the sewing materials of Ruig's mother—fine strips of thong for thread; slender needles and pins of bone; sharp-pointed instruments of flint for piercing the needle's eye; sharpening-stones on which to grind its point. The sewing-bag, it seemed, was also a vanity-bag—for it contained two or three shell necklaces, strung on thin cords of soft leather, as well as medallions and pendants of ivory, some of them nicely carved.

When Ruig, after his adventure with the mammoth, came running home through the dark, guided by the smell of the wood-smoke from the village fires, he found his father at the entrance of the hut, watching for him. He made no comment when the boy appeared, but drawing aside the skin curtain motioned him to enter. Ruig did so; and by the smoky light of the lamp he saw his mother looking eagerly toward him. As he came in, she raised her arms in a gesture of relief, but did not speak. His father put out the lamp by pinching the wick with his fingers; and in a few moments, stretched on their couches of skins and rushes, all were sound asleep.

It seemed to Ruig that he had only just closed his eyes when fresh air blowing in his face aroused him, and he discovered that it was already daylight. His father and mother were out; and when he looked through the doorway he could see the latter busily engaged upon the skin of some animal which his father had killed the previous day. This skin was tightly stretched by being pegged out on the ground, fur side down; and Ruig's mother with a flint scraper was cleaning every morsel of flesh and fat from the hide to get it ready for curing.

Breakfast was on. A chunk of meat from the animal to which the hide had once belonged, stuck on a twig, and roasted over the coals, was the entire bill of fare; but, followed by a

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handful of berries from the nearest thicket, and washed down by a gulp of water from the spring, it did splendidly; and Ruig then stretched himself, and looked eagerly around for the other boys, that he might tell them of his adventure the evening before.

The boys, however, had scattered upon various duties of their own, for in the camp no one might remain an idler. Some gathered firewood, some helped in the curing of the skins, some fetched fresh rushes from the river for the couches, or to repair the thatches of the huts; and not one of Ruig's playmates happened to be at hand at the moment. He therefore wandered over toward a group of men, his father among the number, who stood at a little distance, thinking that he might find a chance to tell them about seeing the mammoth in the forest the previous day.

These men were all tall and strong, standing six feet or more in height, with fine chests and shoulders, having the muscles of arms and legs wonderfully developed. This was natural, for they lived always in the open air, and were occupied entirely in hunting. They planted no crops, and thus were not bent by the use of the hoe or the plough. Beside being fine physical specimens, these men had faces of great intelligence, with high foreheads and aquiline noses—some of them being actually handsome.

Their clothing was like Ruig's own—a short garment of skin belted in at the waist, leaving arms and legs free. Many wore ornaments about their necks—pendants of flint or ivory carved in various designs; and several had necklaces of the teeth of the elk and cave-bear.

Ruig approached the hunters, and stood for a while listening to their talk. When there was a silence, he ventured to relate his story of seeing the mammoth in the woods the eve-

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ning before. Immediately the hunters became interested, crowding around and asking questions; and later on his father had Ruig guide him to the place where he had found the trail, and spent some time in scouting over the ground, being very careful, however, not to step in the trail itself, as he had in mind a plan by means of which the great beast might be trapped later on, and he did not wish to arouse its suspicions by leaving traces which it would associate with the idea of danger.

After a while the two went back to the camp, Ruig full of excitement as he thought of the coming hunt, and of the part which he himself might bear in it.

The home life of the tribe was of the simplest kind. The great object of all the activities in which men, women and children alike engaged was the support of life itself, very little time being spent upon anything but hunting and fishing, the curing of skins for clothing against the coming of winter, and the manufacture of weapons for the chase, as well as the necessary tools for treating the skins, and shaping and carving the head and shaft of javelin and spear.

Agriculture was unknown to the tribe, as wild fruits and berries were plentiful all about. No domestic animals were kept, although near by on the plains were wild horses and cattle by the thousand. There was not a pet in any of the huts—and this was strange, as boys and girls in any age of the world love animal companions, and will usually tease for them until they get them. But the feeling on this subject was, that it was poor economy to provide food for animals when human beings needed it more.

It must not however be supposed that the camp life was all rough and stern, without recreations of any kind. One of the greatest diversions among the men and boys was compe-

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tition in athletic sports; and several times a year a general field-day was held, with tests of all sorts designed to show the strength and skill of each member of the tribe, no one being exempt unless he were actually incapacitated by illness or injury.

The women and girls too had contests of their own. These consisted of efforts to outdo one another in the curing and dressing of skins, so that the leather would be pliable and soft, and the fur bright and smooth. Jewelry of a certain sort was also manufactured; and this consisted of necklaces either of small shells, pierced and strung on a thin cord of sinew, or of the teeth of animals used in a similar way. These necklaces were usually finished off with a pendant, carved or etched with a design which varied with the skill and ingenuity of the maker.

By far the most popular diversion of the tribe was this artistic industry of embellishing weapons and tools with representations of various forms of animal life. These were found on every surface which afforded even the smallest space for some kind of a picture, which was cut or carved in relief by means of delicate flint gravers and chisels-tools the making of which was in itself an art. Skill in this sort of work was well-nigh universal, the tribe having apparently a genuine gift for artistic expression. Figures of human beings were rarely attempted, and were much less natural than those of the animals; though now and then a little statue of a man or woman would be turned out which had considerable merit. For the most part, however, these efforts produced results which were caricatures, very fat and very ugly.

Schools, of course, there were none; every boy was instructed by his father, and every girl by her mother, in those things which it was necessary to know about life if one was to

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continue to live at all; how to fight the unkindness and cruelty of Nature; how to provide against drought and frost and storm; how to fight the beasts, matching skill and cunning against strength and ferocity; how to care for the physical body, that it might always be in top condition for the tests which at any moment it might be called upon to meet. Life in the tribe was an exceedingly practical affair, and every lesson was of an exceedingly practical character. This must needs be so, if men were to meet life on equal terms. The idler, the dreamer, the coward, was out of place in a world of conflict against hard facts; before long, he would cease to occupy any place at all in such a world; and so alertness and courage, resourcefulness and ingenuity, were the great qualities which it was first of all sought to teach the boys and girls. Upon these essentials all else must be based.

As for Ruig, very early in life he had made up his mind to become as much like his father as he could, in every way. He admired him more than any other man in the tribe, although there were some who were more famous hunters than he, and had had more thrilling adventures. But his father, Ruig thought, had a certain poise and dignity which none of the others possessed. He was a quiet man, pondering a question for a good while before he ventured to express an opinion; but when he did speak, it was always with such directness and common sense as to carry conviction with it. He was one of the head-men, and thus was entitled to carry upon ceremonial occasions the mysterious crooked ivory baton, with its famous ibex carved in high relief upon the grip. He was very strong and very graceful—the ease and simplicity of his motions in handling axe or spear causing him to appear almost careless, yet few could equal him in the use of either weapon, whether in play or in earnest. Ruig idolized his

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father; and his father, in turn, thought the world of him, and only hoped, as did Ruig himself, that the boy might thoroughly learn all the lessons which he wanted to teach him. Whether this hope was realized, will be seen as the story goes on.

FLINT AND BONE

CHAPTER III

FLINT AND BONE

GRAUM was an old man living in one of the huts on the outskirts of the camp, who was very expert in the making of weapons, and had a collection of them which Ruig and the other boys were never tired of looking over. Graum could remember farther back than any one else, and had a fund of traditions and stories extending back farther still, which, like most old people, he was fond of telling whenever he could find an audience. Such an audience he could always be sure of among the boys, who would sit around on the floor of the hut, listening open-mouthed to the old man's tales, and passing from hand to hand the various weapons and tools, while Graum explained their uses.

He would show them, too, the deep scars on his shoulders and back made by the claws of a cave-bear with which he had once had a battle; and he would relate the story of the great ibex hunt on the glacier, when several of his companions died from exposure, while he himself crawled back to camp with both feet frozen, so that they had to be cut off at the ankle-joint, and the stumps seared with red-hot stones to prevent him from bleeding to death. This, of course, put an end to Graum's hunting; but he became the official maker of weapons for the hunters; and it would have been very hard indeed for the tribe to get along without him.

One day Ruig, with some of the other boys, was paying Graum a visit, and the old man seemed especially willing to talk to them and tell them stories. Long ago, he said, before

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the race to which they belonged had come into that region, it had been inhabited by another people, less strong and less intelligent, who had gradually given way before the advance of the newcomers. This other people had flint weapons only, although there might have been some which were made of wood, such as swords and lances, the points of which had been hardened in the fire. But ivory and bone, so largely used by the tribe to which they themselves belonged, these old-time people knew nothing of.

It would be interesting, said Graum, if it could be known what the first weapon was which any man ever used, and how he came to use it. Probably, the old man went on to say, the first weapons of all were the naked hands, which were used to choke an opponent, or to break his limbs by bending or twisting them; while the clenched fist served as a club. Suddenly one day some primitive man got hold of the branch of a tree which broke off in his hand as he was climbing, and he discovered that with this he could strike a terrific blow by swinging it against the head of an enemy. This club he after a while improved by picking out a branch or a long root with a bunch or knob at the end of it. Sometimes he may have thrown this club, instead of striking with it, when he did not wish to wait for the animal or the man which was his enemy to get to close quarters.

When using his fist as a hammer, this primitive man hit upon the idea of grasping in his palm a stone, which not only added weight to his blow, but could actually crack a skull, whereas with his fist alone he could only stun at the most. Next he made a jagged edge on the stone, rendering it more deadly still; and this, too, he used at times as a missile, learning by means of long practice to hurl it with terrific force and precision.

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Effective as such weapons were, however, and great as the advantage was with the man who used them over the other man who knew nothing of them, still they were very rude and clumsy. There was nothing yet like a knife, a spear, or a sword. These, when first invented, were no doubt of wood, and were thus fragile and unreliable; but still, they gave the man something with which he could not merely pound and stun his enemy, but slash and stab him; and this was a great step in advance in the business of self-defence and of attack.

It must have happened one day, continued Graum, that a man of those early times picked up a slab of flint, which, when he struck upon it with another stone, split apart, as flint will do, into a long, flat flake. By again striking this, he split off still more of it, until the man held in his hand a long, narrow piece of stone, sharp on the edges, and easily rubbed to a needle-point at the end—the first flint weapon ever made. This was a discovery of the very greatest importance; it provided the man with a weapon which would hold an edge or a point, as the wooden swords and lances would not do; and which, in addition, was almost indestructible, while the hills and river-beds abounded in material.

Graum produced from his collection some specimens of very early flint knives, dug up in an ancient hunting camp several miles from the village; and showed the boys how rude the construction was. He then brought out others made in a much later period—beautifully chipped and trimmed, and many of them polished until they were as smooth as ivory. These, strange to say, were much more carefully chipped and shaped than any which the boys had seen in use in their own village, made by their own hunters, or even by old Graum himself, who was certainly no bungler in this kind of work; and the boys wondered why this was the case. Graum was

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fond of teasing once in a while, and so he kept them guessing about this, while he pretended to be busy in various ways about the hut; but he finally explained the puzzle as follows.

In the days when the only material used for weapons was flint, which lasted a long time, the same knife or dagger being possibly used by a hunter all his life, it became the custom to take great pains in the shaping and trimming of the weapons, so as to make them as symmetrical and perfect as possible. In the present, Graum pointed out, when bone and ivory, materials much more easily worked than flint, were almost exclusively used in the manufacture of spears and javelins, still there were some flint ones; but with the growing attention which was being paid to the more tractable materials, less and less care was given to the flint, and more and more to the articles of ivory, bone and horn. Of course, there must be a great many flint tools used in cutting and carving these; and Graum had in the hut an immense variety of chisels, planers, trimmers and drills, for every conceivable use. He possessed also a large assortment of articles of all kinds which could be made out of bone and ivory—cups of reindeer horn, chiefs' batons for ceremonial occasions, dart-throwers wonderfully carved with figures of animals, harpoon, javelin and lance-heads without number. There were also medallions to be worn on necklaces, and tiny bird-darts not much larger than a knitting-needle; but most wonderful of all were some little figures of antelopes and horses, almost incredibly perfect, carved from the ivory of a mammoth's tusk.

The implements used in this work of carving were very specially made of flint, and Graum kept them with great care in a wallet lined with little compartments, where each delicate tool nestled by itself in a pocket of soft leather, lest its sharp edge or point become dulled.

FLINT AND BONE

Ruig asked about these earlier tribes of which Graum had spoken, and wanted to know how long ago it was that they had lived in this neighborhood, but Graum could not give any definite information. He told the boys, however, something more about the old hunting camp where he had found the ancient flint weapons, and this showed to a certain degree how old they must be.

In this camp, Graum said, which had evidently been used by many successive generations of hunters, until the game, once so plentiful in the vicinity, had either been destroyed or finally frightened away, there could be seen remains of at least six different camps, one on top of the other, each with its stone hearths showing where the fireplaces had been, together with many articles such as spear and arrow heads, with a few human skeletons, and very many animal bones scattered through the layers of earth which had gradually through centuries of time accumulated above the ruins. When Graum was a young man, he with some others had once camped in this region, and had spent a number of days in digging among the ancient mounds which marked the site of the camp, for the sake of satisfying their curiosity; and they had gone to the depth of three spears' lengths before giving up, while even then they had not reached bottom. How much lower down they might have discovered relics, it was impossible to say; but they had penetrated deep enough to prove that the camp was very, very old indeed. At the lowest level which they had reached they had found a skeleton of some animal not recognized by any of the hunters—evidently belonging to a species which had become extinct before the memory of any man now living.

There was one interesting thing to which Graum called the attention of the boys, and that was, that before bone and

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ivory came into use for weapons and utensils, there was little or no evidence that attempts had been made by the earlier peoples to beautify the articles which they manufactured—artistic talent being apparently unknown. Flint, of course, was too hard to lend itself to any such effort, and no doubt this was the chief explanation of the fact; and yet, to bring the art of etching and carving to its present point of perfection must have required an immensely long time. This thought the old hunter left with the boys to work out for themselves.

Before the visit came to a close, however, old Graum took it upon himself to unfold a bit of prophecy.

A time would come, said he, when ivory and bone would in turn be supplanted by some new material, just as they had taken the place of flint; and a way would be found of throwing darts much farther, and with much greater accuracy, than was the case now, even with the aid of the dart-thrower; just as the dart-thrower was an advance upon the unaided human arm. When this method should be discovered, added Graum, the hunters could go out boldly against even the largest beasts and, safe themselves, could attack them from a distance, instead of as now imperiling their lives, or being obliged to have recourse to the uncertain devices of traps and deadfalls.

All this the boys took in; and as they started homeward, each imagined himself the lucky inventor of this new and wonderful weapon of which the old hunter had spoken.

That they were all mistaken, the coming days were to reveal; and they did not guess how soon.

OUTWITTING THE STRONG

CHAPTER IV

OUTWITTING THE STRONG

ON a certain morning Ruig's father with a dozen other men set out for the place where Ruig had had his evening adventure in the tree, and had seen the mammoth pass along what appeared to be a regular trail through the woods.

All of the men were fully armed with their strongest spears, and had axes in their belts and throwing-stones in their pouches. Even Ruig carried his set of javelins. But in addition, several of the hunters had with them broad wooden spades, rudely formed from slabs split out of a fallen tree; while two others bore on their shoulders great rolls of hide, the purpose of which it was hard to guess. Ruig at any rate wondered what they were for, but when he asked his father about them, the hunter only smiled, and advised him to wait and see.

On approaching the edge of the woods, the company halted, while two of the most skilful trackers went forward to investigate. They were gone for some time, and while waiting, Ruig's father explained to him the plan which they had in mind.

They were after the mammoth, he said, which apparently had a home, or at any rate a feeding-ground, not far away, and certain places where it went from time to time, often enough to wear the trail through the grass and shrubbery. The trackers had gone ahead to discover whether there were any signs that the beast had recently been in the neighbor-

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hood; they could tell by the condition of the trail, and by such indications as freshly broken twigs, or branches from which the mammoth had plucked the leaves as he went along. If the report was that he had passed by within half a day at the outside, or within a shorter period, the present plan would be given up; to carry it out would take one entire day at least; and the chances would be that the mammoth might return before their preparations were completed, and so render them useless, for he would take alarm from the signs of their presence, and quit the neighborhood for good. Should the hunters on the contrary find the trail cold, they would assume that the great beast was not in the immediate vicinity, and would take a chance on having time to complete their job before he came back. To be sure, he might not return for some time; but he almost certainly would do so eventually, for it was the habit of all animals to go back to old feeding-grounds, just as people like to revisit familiar places, perhaps for no better reason than that they are familiar. But whether it was a week or a month from now, the plan would still be good; and the mammoth would find it so, to his sorrow.

The trackers now returned and reported that there were no signs of the recent presence of the great creature, and accordingly the whole party went on to the edge of the woods where the trail emerged from the trees. It was evident that no animal had passed this way for some time, as here and there along the trail there were footprints in the soft ground in which water was standing, showing that they must be old, as no rain had fallen for several days, and this moisture had been kept from evaporation by the shade of the trees. The hunters advanced a little way into the woods, looking for a place suitable for their purpose. They walked on either side of the trail, and at a little distance from it, treading as carefully as

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possible so as to leave no traces. Finally they came to a place where the trail passed between two great trees, with thick underbrush on both sides, and here the order was given to halt. The hunters laid aside their weapons, all but two, who were posted as sentries up and down the trail; the men who carried the rolls of hide spread them out flat upon the ground, with stones at the edge to keep them open, and the wooden spades now explained their presence as, marking out a huge circle across the center of which the trail directly passed, the men began to dig, throwing the soft earth carefully upon the hides, which were from time to time lifted and carried to some distance, the earth being scattered among the bushes out of sight.

Ruig could not for the life of him imagine what was going on; and his father watched him for some minutes with a smile of amusement at his perplexity, before he explained.

There were some animals, he said, which could be overcome by means of superior strength and courage, and attacked with success by javelin and spear, or even with the throwing-stone. But the mammoth was too huge, his heavy coat of hair and wool, and the thickness of his hide, making him almost invulnerable to weapons which were deadly to any other animal, except perhaps the woolly rhinoceros. The mammoth, therefore, must be overcome by cunning, instead of strength; and the way in which they were going about it was one method in which this was to be accomplished.

The men would dig a deep pit to serve as a trap; they would cover it with brush and twigs, and would scatter a light coating of earth and dead leaves over it so as to make it look exactly like the rest of the trail; and the mammoth, coming unsuspectingly along some evening, would crash through into the pit, whence he would struggle in vain to escape, while the

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hunters from the safe ground above despatched him with their spears.

Sometimes, Ruig's father went on to say, the sides of the pit would be vertical, a great pointed stake being planted firmly at the bottom; or there might be additional stakes in the sides of the pit, slanting upward at an acute angle, so that the unlucky mammoth would impale himself upon these in his fall, and die from loss of blood. But this style of trap took longer to prepare than that which the men were now digging, while the present plan was equally good. Ruig, as he watched operations, soon caught the idea. The sides of the pit sloped inward toward the center as the digging progressed. At the bottom they came to a point, so that the hole was in the shape of a cone turned upside down. The feet of the trapped mammoth would all four be wedged together at the bottom of the conical pit, and he would be absolutely helpless, the victim of his own immense weight, which crushed his legs under him as in a vise.

The soil here was loose, and the work went on rapidly. Load after load of earth was carried away and disposed of. The pit at last took its completed shape. Slender poles were then laid across the opening, these in turn were covered with twigs and brush; and last of all, came the final coating of earth and leaves. The hides were then rolled up, all traces of the work being removed by the experienced hunters; and when Ruig looked again for the trap, had it not been for the two big trees between which he knew it to be situated, he found it impossible to believe that the trail had ever been disturbed. The mammoth was as good as caught; it was only a question of time.

As the party sat resting for a while before starting for home, Ruig's father reminded him that life was one continual

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struggle for survival between men and animals, as well as between animals themselves. Those which did survive would not necessarily be the strongest and fiercest, but those which were wisest and most cunning, thus being able to match craft against strength, as they were doing now in case of the mammoth. Best of all would be strength combined with cunning, and guided by intelligence. Some animals possessed this combination in a slight degree, but they did not appear to be able to develop this and add to it. Man alone could do this. For such reasons, a time would come when man would overcome all the beasts, and perhaps even compel them to work for him, and help him carry out his plans. The wild horses and the wild cattle, now thought of as game simply to be hunted and killed for their flesh and their hides, might some day become tamed, and be the servants of man. Even the wolf and the boar might be domesticated: who could tell? Years and years and years must pass before this could become true; but true it would nevertheless be; because man's intelligence and imagination would outdo the strength and cunning of all the other animals put together.

This gave Ruig quite a lot to think about in days to come. Just now, however, he was thinking of the unsuspecting mammoth, and the fate which lay in store for him along the forest trail.

CLOSED CO. SCHOOLS

Even as his father ceased speaking, and the hunters stood up and stretched themselves, gathering together their weapons and tools preparatory to starting for home, all paused in what they were doing, and turned their heads in the direction of the prairie, where the trail emerged from the woods. They became as though petrified in the act of listening. For a few moments nothing was heard; then there came plainly to their ears a sound: the sound of dull regular heavy footsteps upon

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soft ground, distinguishable against the silence of the forest, and felt almost as much as heard, for the very earth seemed to vibrate like a vast drum under the tread of the mammoth coming along the trail.

Swiftly the trained hunters took cover, disappearing without a sound behind trees and shrubs. At the first suspicion of danger, Ruig's father had seized him by the arm, and the two lay side by side behind a low ledge of rock cropping out among the bushes, through a screen of which they could spy without danger of exposing themselves.

For a few moments the sound of the mammoth's approach ceased again; but it was soon resumed, and became more distinct as the great beast drew nearer and nearer the fatal spot where the trap was hidden. Ruig's heart was pounding as it had pounded only a few nights ago, when, concealed among the foliage of his tree, he had waited for his first glimpse of this very creature—for that it was the very same he must believe.

Nearer and nearer came the plodding tread of the monster. Soon they could make him out—the gently swaying trunk between the arching tusks; the ears nervously twitching to and fro, whether from the habit of ceaseless listening, or for the purpose of driving away the flies; they could see the fat ugly head, the little pig eyes gleaming as they turned hither and thither. The wind was right for the concealed hunters; the mammoth could have no intimation whatever of their presence. Steadily he lurched along, making good headway for so clumsy seeming a beast. Steadily he approached the hidden death. He was almost upon it, on its very edge, when suddenly he halted. Had he scented danger? Was there some trace of the digging which the hunters had forgotten to conceal? The mammoth appeared to be considering some

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question of importance, as he stood there looking straight ahead of him up the forest path. Then all at once he started forward. One step—another—and then with a great crash of splintered saplings, and amid a cloud of flying dust, with a shrill scream of rage and fear, the immense body of the unlucky beast plunged downward into the conical pit, his legs wedged together beneath him, one splendid tusk snapped off at the root, only the writhing trunk still free.

With shouts of triumph the hunters came springing out of their hiding-places. One in his eagerness came too near, and was snatched and dashed to death against the ground. Before the deadly trunk could loosen its grasp, it was slashed in two by a blow from a flint knife; and Ruig's father, leaping down upon the huge woolly back, drove his keen blade through fat and hide and spine just behind the skull. The mammoth shivered, and became still.

Sadly the hunters laid the body of their dead comrade upon one of the hides which they had brought with them, and covered him with a layer of green branches. He had been a young man of great promise, only recently initiated into the tribe; and no doubt it was his eagerness to distinguish himself which had brought him so rashly within reach of the deadly trunk. Slowly the party started homeward, after laying again across the pit a quantity of saplings and brush, weighted with stones to protect the carcass from wolves and hyenas. Tomorrow they would return and cut it up as best they could, its position in the pit rendering this rather a difficult task. But at any rate, Ruig's mammoth, as he proudly called it, would furnish the village with meat for some days to come.

HUTH THE CUNNING ONE

CHAPTER V

HUTH THE CUNNING ONE

THREE or four times a year the men of the camp organized a sort of field-day for contests of various kinds, all of them, however, connected with hunting, and none of them sports pure and simple; for the very existence of these men depended upon the hunter's skill, and proficiency in the use of the various weapons was the price of life for each and every one of them.

Shortly after the visit of the boys to the hut of old Graum, when he prophesied that some time a new and better hunting weapon would be invented, the day arrived for one of these contests; and every one in the village, men and women, girls and boys, was required to be on hand. The women and girls, of course, stayed in the background; but the boys were very much in evidence, for they were continually being trained in the use of weapons, and indeed spent hours every day in practice, which, under penalty of severe punishment, they were never permitted to shirk. At these contests there were special events for the boys, at which excitement ran fully as high as at the efforts of the men—for the boys had keen rivalry among themselves, and the men for their part kept shrewd eyes on them to see which ones exhibited special aptitude and skill in the use of the various weapons, as well as swiftness and endurance in the foot-races, which always occupied a conspicuous place on the program of the day. There were no prizes for the winners—and as far as the boys were concerned, none were needed; if they might receive an approving nod

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or a pat on the shoulder from one of the famous hunters, their cup of glory was full.

On this particular occasion, Ruig's father was in charge of the arrangements for the contests; and he organized the various events in order, beginning with the simpler ones, and going on to those requiring greater strength or a higher degree of skill, so that the incompetents might be gradually weeded out, and the interest become keener as the day advanced.

The grounds where the trials took place were on the level prairie just outside the village. A blazed tree at some distance showed the turning-point for the foot-races. The men of the tribe were famous runners, and many times life depended as much upon speed as upon skill with a weapon, especially when a wounded rhinoceros was in question; for this animal, in spite of his apparently clumsy build, was astonishingly swift, and besides could follow the scent like a bloodhound.

In another part of the course, a stump was the mark for the throwing-stones, while another tree served as target for javelins and darts.

Ruig's father had lined up the contestants in two groups, pretty evenly divided as to expertness and strength; and there were to be not only individual winners, but team winners as well, points being scored for the success of each member of a team, just as is done in similar contests today.

First upon the program was the competition with the throwing-stone. Every one made a trial at this, for as has been said, this was almost the oldest of weapons, and one to which every man had been accustomed from infancy, for boys will throw stones before they can walk; and constant practice with a regular missile like this makes one a deadly shot.

One by one the contestants stepped to the line, eyed the distant mark, balanced the stone somewhat as a modern pitcher

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balances a baseball, and then with one swift step forward delivered the stone at the stump, making eye, hand and foot coördinate as one. Nearly every cast landed near the mark. Half a dozen struck it. And two stuck fast in the stump, the jagged points of the flint penetrating deep into the wood.

Some of the casts were direct, going in a straight line from hand to mark; but the hunters who had best control made the stone, heavy as it was, curve and sail, turning in a wide sweep to dart in the last minute at the target.

The boys all had a chance at the stone-throwing. None of them was strong enough to penetrate the wood with his cast; but there were several who could throw a considerable curve; and Ruig himself had the satisfaction of seeing two out of his three tries land in the dirt at the very foot of the stump.

Old Graum was squatting on the ground at the edge of the course, his injury preventing him from being any longer a contestant, though his arm was still vigorous and his eye keen. He watched every move of the men and of the boys as well, grunting approval or disapproval, and noting for future reference many a point from which later on some man or boy would be sure to hear.

After the stone-throwing came the javelin-casting—first with the hand only, then with the aid of the throwing-stick. This was about two feet in length, having at one end a socket in which rested the butt of the javelin, its shaft lying in a groove along the stick. This arrangement gave an artificial length to the thrower's arm, resulting in a much longer throw, the groove along which the weapon lay helping it to fly straight. This was a very pretty exhibition, and points were about evenly divided between the two teams. But as usual, the chief interest of the day lay in the foot-races, for there is

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something fascinating about the movement of a living body which is never found in any competition of a different sort.

In the foot-races, three men stood out as favorites. The layout of this was about two hundred and fifty yards to the blazed tree, which must be circled by the runner, then back in a parallel course to the starting-line, which was also the finish-line. Huth, first of the three favorites, was a rather slender graceful fellow, but having the heavy limbs of the practiced runner. He had won the race on the last two occasions, and stood, therefore, a good chance of making it three.

Narg, the second favorite, was the direct opposite of Huth in every way, for beside being of more massive build, he was as awkward as the other was graceful. When Huth bounded over the course like an antelope, Narg charged along like a rhinoceros; and like the latter covered the ground at an astonishing rate. It was going to be a pretty contest between these two; for Dourm, the third favorite, while running in beautiful form, had never won a race in his life, though he had several times secured second or third place.

Twenty runners were finally lined up along the starting-line, their bodies bending forward, hands clenched at their sides, eyes intently fixed on the starter, who was to drop his baton as the signal. Of the twenty, Huth alone rested on toes and fingers like a modern sprinter. At the signal all were off like a pack of hounds; but before the tree was reached, the three favorites had made their way to the front. Narg was first to circle the mark; Dourm flashed around it directly after him; while to the disappointment of the spectators, Huth seemed to be running sluggishly, as though out of condition. He was, however, only a second behind Dourm in rounding the tree; and then the real race began. Narg thundered down the track like a whirlwind, dust and leaves flying from

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beneath his pounding feet. Dourm, a little to the side, and running like a beautiful machine, kept right at Narg's shoulder; while Huth was on the other side, still farther to the rear. Like the practiced runner that he was, he was allowing the others to make the pace, while at the last moment he would call on his reserves, and as so often before, pass them like a streak of light.

On this occasion, however, something went wrong with his calculations. Just as he tautened nerve and muscle for the supreme effort, to the amazement of every one, Dourm, who up to now had been anchored at Narg's huge shoulder, but unable as it seemed to gain an inch upon the flying giant, let out from somewhere one more link of speed, and flashed over the line a winner, while Huth and Narg made it neck and neck for second place.

Narg, as soon as he could get his breath, roared with laughter, as though he considered his defeat a huge joke. But Huth, although he tried to smile, felt his disappointment keenly and, while the boys were having their javelin contest, disappeared among the huts. Graum was the only one who saw him go; and the old hunter watched with a little anxiety until he reappeared. Huth came after a while and stood behind the line of spectators. In his hand he had something resembling a length of sapling with a cord hanging from it, while in his belt were half a dozen darts. Graum studied this apparatus with interest, but could make nothing out of it, and after a moment he gave it up, and turned his attention to the boys and their contest.

A prophecy of Graum was about to be fulfilled. Just as the final event of the day had been decided and the crowd was beginning to disperse, Huth spoke to Ruig's father, who clapped his hands for attention, and made announcement that Huth had something which he wished to show the hunters.

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Huth stepped out before the crowd where all could see him. He held up before him the piece of sapling, which was about four feet long, and had been shaved down so that it tapered somewhat toward the ends. To one tip of the sapling was fastened a stout twisted thong of reindeer hide, a little shorter than the sapling, with a loop in its free end. Resting the sapling on the ground and bracing it against his foot, Huth bent it over slowly until he could slip the loop into a notch in the other end of the sapling. This kept it bent, and the tight cord hummed as Huth plucked it with his thumb. He now held this affair upright in front of him with his left hand, grasping it about midway, with the cord toward him. He drew from his belt a dart, tipped with an ivory point, and notched at the other end. This notch he fitted to the cord; and still holding it with thumb and fingers, he extended his left arm to its full stretch, drew back the other hand until the sapling bent almost to a half-circle, then suddenly released it. A whirring sound was heard. The dart flashed through the air too swiftly for the eye to follow it, and quivered in the blazed tree at the end of the course.

With open mouths the hunters stood staring—at the tree, at Huth, at the strange implement in his hand, at one another. A great thought suddenly dawned upon their minds, just as old Graum, rising in his excitement to his footless stumps, voiced what was manifest to all: that here began a new epoch in the warfare of man against the beasts of the earth; death dealt from a distance, which the beasts could neither foresee nor avoid; safety for the hunter, a lessening of the number of human tragedies; and a long step forward toward eventual peace from the endless struggle to survive.

Revolving this great idea in their minds, the men and women dispersed to their huts; and the field-day was over.

THE PACK

CHAPTER VI

THE PACK

RUIG had thought a good deal about the habits of the different animals, not only as he himself had been able to observe them, but as he had learned about them from the stories of the hunters as well. Some animals, he knew, were found in pairs. Some seemed always to run alone. But most of them traveled in larger or smaller groups, as though they loved company, being in this respect very much like people, who always seemed to live in groups of their own. Ruig asked Graum about this one day; and the old hunter explained it to him in this fashion.

Some animals, said he, are by nature timid and peaceable, while others again are aggressive and bold. Nearly all of those which live upon vegetable food belong to the former class, the cattle, the deer, the horses, and so on; while those that live on flesh, such as the tiger, the hyena, and the wolf, are cunning, cruel, and savage.

One curious thing there was to be noted—to Ruig this was a new idea—and that was, that the bear, commonly thought of as a beast of prey, is really a very domestic, good-natured creature, living mostly upon berries and fruits, with a childish fondness for wild honey, which it loves to dig out of the hollow stumps where the bees have stored it away.

More remarkable than this, however, was the fact that the woolly rhinoceros and the mammoth, for all their huge bulk, and their formidable horns and tusks, did not live upon flesh, but upon grass, herbs, leaves, and the tender roots of water-

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plants, which they found along the margin of the swamps, or on the river-bank. So it was that the biggest and fiercest appearing beasts were not necessarily the most dangerous; and this same thing was true, added Graum, with a sly grin, of men and boys as well.

There are bullies and cowards among the animals as there are among people; and they can be handled in the same way wherever you find them.

Now those animals which went in herds, like the deer, said the old hunter, or in bands and packs, like the hyenas and wolves, always did so for a good reason—a reason of defense or a reason of offense. The deer, for example, timid by nature, and singly liable to fall an easy prey to wolves or tigers, can at times put up a stiff defense by gathering in a close group, horns outward, so as to show an armed circle in every direction. Graum had seen wolves, made desperate by hunger, make repeated attempts to break such a defense, but in vain, finding the sharp antlers of a buck presented against every leap, and slinking away at last into the woods, leaving the bodies of a considerable number upon the snow. Deer, of course, usually depend for safety upon their fleetness of foot, and when feeding always have their sentries out to warn them of the approach of danger; but in winter, when the snow is deep, and especially when it is coated with crust, through which their sharp hoofs penetrate, while the spreading paws of the wolf give him a foothold, the timid deer, by acting courageously together, seeming for the time to change their nature, can beat off with success their more savage enemy.

The wolves, however, went on Graum, travel in packs not for purposes of defense, but for purposes of attack, and because numbers here can often accomplish what otherwise would be impossible. A pack of wolves will surround and

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worry a bison or an elk by charging at him from all sides at once, thus compelling him to turn continually in one direction and then in another until they have tired him out, and can finally all rush in and pull him down. It is only rarely that any wolf is able to make a kill alone, unless the victim is either very young or very old, though now and then one is found strong enough and fleet enough to pull down a cow or an elk all by himself.

The old hunter paused for a few moments with a reflective air, and then went on.

People, said he, have both *deer* reasons and *wolf* reasons for many of the things which they do. For example, instead of scattering singly over the prairie and through the woods, and living each one by himself, and for himself, they gather in camps and villages, both for purposes of offense and purposes of defense. A company acting together can defend themselves better against an attack than can the same number of individuals acting each for himself. They can form a plan upon which all can act at once, and they can help each other when any one happens to be hard pressed. A smaller number of men acting in concert can usually give a good account of themselves against a much larger number who have no discipline and no plan.

And then when a hunt is on, the wolf tactics come into play. What could one man do, for example, in attacking a mammoth, or a woolly rhinoceros? He might, to be sure, succeed in landing a javelin or two in the thick hide; but it would require a good deal more than that to bring the creature down, even if he were to stand still and offer himself as a target—which was exceedingly unlikely to happen. The hunter would be lucky if he did not find the tables turned, and himself the hunted. He might, it is true, by dint of immense

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labor, dig a pit or construct a trap to snare the great beast; but no one man would even dream of attempting it. Acting together, however, twenty men can go against a mammoth with all confidence of success. They can run him and worry him, surround him and tease him and enrage him, until at last they wear him out; or they may maneuver him into a swamp, where his great weight will mire him, and make him an easy prey for their spears. Or by working together they can dig one of the great pits, as had been done by Ruig's father and his companions just recently, into which the great beast may unsuspectingly tumble, to be dispatched at leisure.

These were wolf methods, Graum said—and men had learned them by observation of the animals themselves, a thing which one need never be ashamed of doing if he can himself profit by it.

Ever and ever so long ago, the old hunter went on to say, when men were fewer than now, as well as wilder and more savage, the custom was for each man to be suspicious of every other man, looking on him as an interloper and an enemy, to be driven off the hunting grounds at least, and killed if that were possible. But one day perhaps it happened that two of these men found themselves exposed to a common danger. A boar attacked them, or perhaps a bison charged them, and each one had to help the other to prevent the beast from killing them both. After that, it might be that these two men became hunting companions or partners, realizing that it was always a good thing to be of assistance one to the other.

This was the earliest beginning of comradeship, out of which was developed friendship; and this led eventually to the practice of gathering together in villages, for the sake of the good which this brought to all, both for *deer* reasons and for *wolf* reasons.

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Now and then two packs would find themselves matched against one another—the pack of wolves against the pack of men—as in some especially severe winter, when game was scarce, and the beasts were rendered bold by hunger. Then the wolves might be seen stealing out from the woods, their shadows black against the snow: great wide faces, narrowing down to the sharp muzzle where gleamed pointed teeth; red tongues lolling from the side of the jaws; on the shoulders a heavy mane of fur which bristled when the beast was angry; cruel green eyes shining with hunger. Now and then as they came on, these pirates of the forest, in a long irregular line from among the shadowy trees, one of their number would halt for a moment, throw back his head, and give out a long shuddering howl. Cautiously they would steal in toward the camp and spread out around it, watching for a chance to rush in and pounce upon some child, or even upon a grown person who chanced to be alone. Then the hunters also would practice wolf methods. Armed with their throwing-stones and darts, they would spread out fanwise, keeping in touch with one another, and at the signal would launch into the pack a volley of missiles, trying to pick off the leaders if they could. When a wolf went down with a broken leg or with a javelin between his ribs, he would instantly be set upon by the rest of the pack, and torn into bits in a moment of time. This the hunters knew, and they always counted on it in their attack; for while the wolves were busy worrying the wounded, the men would charge into them with their spears and clubs, and usually rout them and drive them back into the forest.

Here was another lesson, said Graum, which men had learned from their observation of the pack: that when they got quarreling among themselves, they always opened the way

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for trouble; only as they acted together in harmony and good-will could they succeed.

Graum looked keenly at Ruig as he made this last remark; and then he added that this was a good lesson for boys. Ruig hung his head, for he remembered how during the foot-race a few days before he and one of his competitors had been so occupied in jockeying and shouldering one another that they were both thrown out of stride, with the result that a second-rate runner had passed them and come in the winner.

Ruig left Graum's hut in the hope that some day he might himself see the wolf-pack in action; with the added determination that he would always be on the watch for lessons which might be drawn from the habits of animals. He could see that everything the old hunter had said was true; realizing for the first time the great importance in many ways of united action among the members of the tribe in things which concerned them all alike, and how necessary it was to maintain a friendly and cordial feeling all around.

FIRE

CHAPTER VII

FIRE

ONE morning Ruig, having nothing special to do, was sitting on a log outside the hut, watching his mother kindle the fire for the day. Overnight, the ashes had been scraped together so as to cover the embers, and now when Ruig's mother raked them open again, he noticed how quickly the coals began to glow when she blew upon them. Two or three bits of firewood, burned in two so that only the ends were left, she laid with the charred points together; and in a moment both began to show red where they touched, finally breaking into a clear gentle flame. After a little, when some dry rushes and a handful of twigs had been thrown on, a merry blaze crackled up; and soon the fire was going strong.

Ruig moved over a little nearer on his log, partly because he was cold, and partly in order to watch the fire, which he never tired of studying, and about which he never ceased to wonder. He loved to see the flame lay hold on the logs, slowly at first, licking around them as if tasting them; finally seizing upon them, flowing around and over them, devouring them until all there was left was a smaller likeness of the log in grayish cinders, which fell into ashes when you poked it with a stick.

Where did the rest of the log go to? Where did the fire come from? Now and then Ruig's fire at home went out, and had to be kindled anew from that of a neighbor. And once in a while, when there was heavy rain, all the fires would be drowned, and some one would have to go to work with the fire-drill to start them afresh.

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This was an interesting thing to watch, and was by no means as easy as it looked, for it took strength and persistence before you got your smoke even, to say nothing of your flame.

This was the way of it. Two men would squat on the ground with a flat slab of wood lying between them. There was a small hole in this slab, and in this hole one of the men would set the point of the drill, which was a straight shaft of hard wood about eighteen inches long. He held the drill firmly in the socket by means of a small stone hollowed on the under side, which he pressed down upon the upper end of the drill; and the other man twisted the shaft itself rapidly around, back and forth in the hole, by means of a thong with which he had taken a half hitch around it, grasping the two ends in his hands so as to tauten it and make it take hold. Pretty soon there would be smoke around the foot of the drill. Powdered wood from an old dry rotten stump would then be sprinkled on; then a handful of dried leaves or ferns; and before long a tiny flame would spring up, which would be gently coaxed and fed until it became a real blaze.

Ruig was very fond of seeing this done, and had sometimes tried it himself, though without much success, his only results being a little smoke. It was, however, not the fire itself, but the warmth of it, which puzzled him most. This sensation of warmth you felt when you sat in the sun, or when you piled the furs over you on a cold night. You felt it whenever you ran, or exercised your body in any active way; or when you huddled close with the others in the hut or the cave.

The opposite feeling was that of cold, and this was your enemy, which would get you if it could. Sometimes hunters succumbed to it, as at the time of the great ibex-hunt, when several of them froze to death on the glacier, as Graum had

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told him—the time when the cold killed Graum's feet, so that he had to cut them off and throw them away.

Cold, you felt if you sat still in the wind, or if you touched snow or ice, or if you left off your outer clothes in winter. Ruig wondered about this, too, and why it was that there was a change of seasons, so that one had to prepare for it, and provide against it in various ways.

The animals and the birds did the same, but their methods were different from those of people. They either migrated to warmer places in cold weather, like the songbirds, or to colder places in warm weather, like the woolly rhinoceros. These animals that stayed in the same region the year round simply changed their coats, growing a thick heavy one in winter, and shedding it in summer, thus outwitting the climate, and getting the better of it at its own game.

But there was one thing about which Ruig wondered most of all: who made the first fire? and how did he know how to do it? The village fires were kindled from one another, and there was comparatively little danger of their ever all being out at once; but there must have been very long ago a time when nobody had any fire at all, when nobody had ever seen one; when all food was eaten raw; when there was no protection against cold except by putting on more clothes; but since there were fires now, there must have been a first one; and how it had been kindled, Ruig very much wanted to know.

He had often questioned the hunters about this, but none of them could help him: and even old Graum, who knew everything, shook his head. Ruig evidently must think it out for himself; and this is the way he finally did so.

When the hunters were shaping their flint knives and spear-heads, they would take a slab of flint and hammer it with another stone until it split. Then they would carefully

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trim and chip it away until it took just the form they wanted.

Ruig used to sit for hours watching this process, and had even tried it himself in a small way; and one day when he was holding his flint in one hand and pounding it with another stone, sparks would spring out as he struck—one very large and bright one landing upon his bare knee, with a momentary but distinct sensation of heat; and in a minute another fell upon the corner of his skin apron, going out almost instantly, but leaving behind a strong smell of scorched fur. Ruig was on the track of the secret. If the spark was large enough, and was caught upon something very loose and very dry, it would smoulder for a few seconds, and give you time to blow on it, as you did on the tinder when you were using the fire-drill, or upon the embers of your fire in the morning; and you could thus fan it into a flame.

Acting upon this idea, Ruig spent hours in trying out his theory. He collected all kinds of dry materials, such as the hunters used with the fire-drill: punk from a rotten stump, dead leaves, dried ferns rubbed to a fine powder. But for a very long time he had no success at all, although he pounded flints together thousands of times. Not even the smallest spark flew into his tinder-pile.

One afternoon, after a fruitless session of this kind, and just as he was about ready to give up in despair, an idea occurred to Ruig which he at once proceeded to follow up. Scraping his tinder up in both hands, he started at full speed for the place where he had been working at the time that he struck the two big sparks, the first of which had burned his knee, while the second had scorched the fur of his apron. Arriving at the spot, he squatted on the ground, put his tinder carefully away in a dry corner of the ledge, and began a minute scrutiny of the broken bits of rock which were scattered all

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about. These he picked up one by one and carefully examined them, to see whether there was any essential difference between them.

This was the idea which had occurred to Ruig. It might be that the proper way to strike a spark was to strike together not *any* two stones, and not two stones of the same kind, which was what he had been doing, choosing flints because they were the hardest; but two stones of different kinds, which must be exactly suited to produce the desired result. He distinctly remembered that when he had struck the big sparks, he had been holding a flint in one hand; he thought that the other stone was not a flint, but some other kind; and what that kind was he now intended to find out.

He continued, therefore, to pick over with great care the broken bits of rock with which the ground was strewn. Finally he had quite a pile of specimens of various kinds—and now the real experiment began.

Holding in his left hand, as before, a narrow slab of flint, he struck upon this with the bits of rock which he took one by one from the pile of specimens before him. From the first dozen or so no result followed, and Ruig discarded them in disgust. But when his pile was almost exhausted, he picked up a stone which was rather dark in color, and sprinkled through with shining bright specks. Idly he struck this upon his flint; startled, he saw the flash of a spark. Again he struck, and again; and with each blow a spark sprang into momentary life. In high excitement Ruig now assembled his tinder from the crevice where he had placed it. Throwing himself flat on the ground before his little heap of inflammables, he grasped his bits of rock and struck them together; and to his immense delight, soon a huge spark flew directly into the middle of his tinder-pile. A thin thread of smoke

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arose; then a little point of light showed itself. Gently and steadily, so as not to kill it, Ruig breathed upon this point of light. A charred spot appeared, slowly spreading among the tinder; and as he continued to blow, his hands cupped about the tinder, to ward off sudden drafts of air, there came a glow, and then a tiny spear of flame. This he fed with bits of leaf, shreds of fern, and even tufts of fur plucked from his apron; and it brightened and grew stronger, waxed from a flame to a blaze, crackled and spread, until at last, seizing upon a bunch of grass and twigs, it roared up into a real fire, deep and strong, licking and curling hungrily among the fuel which Ruig now threw onto it with both hands. Ruig sprang to his feet and danced around with shouts of delight. At last he had discovered the secret. Now he knew where fire came from, in one way, at least; and he was the proudest boy on earth.

That night there was a thunderstorm, and lightning struck a dead tree at some distance from the camp, setting it on fire, so that it blazed like a great torch stuck up on the hillside. Ruig lay in bed and watched it through the open front of the hut. That might have been another way in which fire was first discovered; but his own method was best. Lightning you could neither control nor get when you needed it most; sparks from a flint you could produce at any time. Satisfied with himself, Ruig fell asleep at last, and dreamed of carrying about with him in his pouch a magic flame, with which he kindled all the village fires every morning, thus becoming head medicine-man of the tribe, entitled to carry one of the carved ivory batons which marked him as a distinguished chief.

Next day when he awoke he was still full of his discovery, and hurried away at the first possible moment to his ledge, where he searched the ground thoroughly for additional speci-

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mens of the proper kind to use with the flint striker. After an hour's work, he had collected several dozen; and best of all, he had discovered an outcrop of ledge from which any quantity might be broken off.

His pouch full of specimens, Ruig now made his way back to the camp, showed the hunters what he had found, and illustrated a dozen times before wondering groups the new method of fire-making, so much simpler than the tedious twisting of the fire-drill. The headmen gave him nods of approval which pleased him more than any other reward could possibly have done; and from that day each hunter carried in his pouch the flint and striking-stone, discarding the old-time implements as out-of-date.

HUNTING THE SABER-TOOTH

CHAPTER VIII

HUNTING THE SABER-TOOTH

IN his talk at various times with the hunters and with old Graum in particular (as in the lecture which the latter had once given him upon the subject of the wolf-pack), Ruig had come to know a good deal about various animals and their habits. He remembered that the bear, savage and dangerous when accompanied by its cubs, is nevertheless peaceable by nature, and comical in some of its behavior, as when eating berries from off the bushes, or when digging honey-comb out of a rotten log. He remembered that the mammoth and the rhinoceros, for all their huge bulk and fierce appearance, fed upon roots and grasses, like the gentlest kind of deer. But Ruig had always had ideas of his own about the tiger, or "saber-tooth," as the hunters called him, from the two great curved tusks which, seven inches or more in length, projected downward from the corners of his upper jaw, having saw-like edges and needle-points. No animal seemed so fierce as the tiger; and Ruig always thought of him as living upon human flesh, lying in wait at night in the reeds near the village, to spring out and strike down some unsuspecting victim. When he himself had occasion to be out after dusk, even when close by the huts, he always circled out into the open so as to be safe from such attacks.

Much to his surprise, however, Ruig found that he must revise his ideas about the tiger and his nature. This animal was in reality timid, and would always skulk and hide if he could, instead of rushing out of the jungle upon his hunters;

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and the tawny colors in his coat exactly matched the reeds and dry grass where he loved to lie, crouched flat along the ground to escape notice. He would almost never attack men unless chased and cornered; but his natural prey consisted of deer and cattle, with now and then perhaps a horse. Old tigers who had grown too stiff to hunt would, it is true, lurk near villages, seeking easy prey among the children; and it was said that when they had once tasted human flesh they always after that preferred it to anything else. Man-eating tigers were, however, comparatively scarce, and therefore there was no great reason for being afraid.

The men of Ruig's village had a grudge though against all tigers, because one of the beasts had carried off a young girl, the daughter of the head-man; and every now and then the hunters would organize an expedition for the purpose of cleaning out the saber-tooth from the neighborhood.

Just now they were planning such a raid; and spear-shafts were being straightened, the points made sharp and fastened firmly with thongs of rawhide, so that they would not turn at the moment of the thrust, and expose the hunter to the deadly spring of the tiger, or the crushing stroke of his great paw. Some of the men were getting ready the stone axes which they carried at their belts, a fearful weapon at close quarters; while it was sometimes hurled from a distance, the heavy flint head rendering it capable of dealing a stunning blow. All had, of course, their throwing-stones in their pouches; and each man was overhauling his bark sandals, and binding his legs below the knee with strips of leather, for protection against the brambles and sharp-edged grass of the jungle.

A dozen men in all comprised this party, all experienced in the hunt, and with special knowledge of the habits of the saber-tooth, and his behavior when attacked. He was not only

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strong, but cunning; and it was a question of matching cunning against cunning, and not merely strength with strength.

Narg, of course, was one of the special number chosen for the raid, for he was a keen tracker, and could follow animal signs where nobody else could; while, for all his great size, he moved through the jungle as lightly and silently as the tiger himself. Ruig was terribly anxious to accompany the party, and did not see why, when he had been taken along at the time they had dug the pit for the mammoth, he should not go this time too. His father said no; but Narg put in a word for him; and it was finally agreed that if Narg would make himself responsible for the boy's safety, he should be permitted to go; for after all, a boy must begin sometime to incur the dangers of the hunt; and Ruig was large and strong for his age. So, having received his father's permission, he dashed delightedly into the hut to get his javelins and spear, while into the loop at the side of his belt he thrust a beautiful little stone axe which Graum had made for him. There was some delay while Narg fitted sandals upon his feet, and wrapped his legs in leather strips like the others; then, feeling every inch a hunter, he marched by Narg's side as the party took its way across the prairie toward the place where at least one tiger was known to have his lair.

As they went along, Narg explained the plan. At about mid-day, when the tiger would probably be lying in the long grass, on account of the heat, the hunters would make ready to surround him. They would form a great circle and gradually close in, beating up the cover as they advanced, by throwing in stones and clubs, so as to disturb the beast and get him moving. According to his habit, the tiger would do his best to hide, and slink away without being seen, and it would require a sharp eye to detect him in the tall grass and rushes,

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for he could creep through with never a sound or a stir, like a snake almost; and unless brought to bay by numbers, the chances were that he would not put up a fight, for it was his well-known trait to avoid hostilities whenever he could.

Waiting, therefore, until the sun was almost overhead, the hunters stationed themselves in a wide circle about the patch of dense jungle somewhere in the depths of which the saber-tooth was believed to be. Slowly they moved forward, narrowing the circle as they advanced, keeping vigilant watch of every tussock and thicket for a glimpse of the striped tawny coat; Ruig well to the rear, as ordered by Narg, creeping along behind the others, but on the alert as sharply as any one, hoping that his own keen eyes might be the first to spy the quarry after all.

Narrower and narrower grew the circle, until only a small patch of jungle remained, and it began to look as though the cover was blank, when one of the hunters on the side of the circle opposite Ruig gave a shout. Narg gripped his spear and bounded forward; and even as he dashed through the brush in the direction of the shout, suddenly, at one side, slipping noiselessly through the grass, Ruig caught sight of a supple yellowish body in the act of stealing backward away from the hunters toward the open. The tiger had eluded them, and was making off while they were following a false scent. Ruig yelled his loudest; at the same time he threw his javelin, and drew the axe from his belt, prepared to defend himself in case the saber-tooth should spring. But instead of doing this, the great beast with a throaty snarl rose in a long graceful leap above the thicket which barred its way, and disappeared along the edge of the woods—Ruig, axe in hand, following in hot pursuit. As he ran, he wondered where the hunters were; but in point of fact, there had been two tigers

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in the jungle, instead of one; and while Ruig was engaging his, the other was meeting his end beneath a rain of spears.

True to his obligation, Narg waited only long enough to make sure that he was not needed at the kill, and quickly retraced his steps to look for Ruig and see that he came to no harm. To tell the truth, he had forgotten him for one moment, in the excitement of the first alarm; and became now a trifle anxious when at the spot where he had last seen him he found no trace of him. At once, however, he picked up the trail, and when Ruig emerged at the edge of the thicket, Narg was at his side; and both saw the saber-tooth just vanishing in another patch of jungle some distance away.

They had the same process to go through with over again; and only waiting until the others had come up, with the dead tiger, lashed to a pole, swinging upon the shoulders of two men, the circle was once more formed, and the beating of the covert began. This time the tiger was less cautious than before; excited perhaps, and frightened by the presence of so many enemies, it was not long before he made for the open, where a little stream ran through a scattered growth of scrub oaks; and stood at bay at the water's edge, bristling and snarling and lashing his long tail.

Cautiously Narg and his hunters approached, spears ready, axes loosened in their belts; gradually, as before, the circle closed in. The tiger could not face them all. Bewildered, he turned from side to side, only to find other enemies on flank and rear. Blood was trickling from his head, where he had evidently somehow received a wound; and now, while missiles hailed upon him from every side, Narg sprang in with his spear and thrust it deep into the tawny throat. The saber-tooth fell, clawing convulsively at the shaft of the weapon, choking and struggling in the death-agony, splashing into the little

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streamlet and out again, twisting horribly among the dead leaves; until at last it stiffened throughout its whole length, then relaxed and lay still.

When the hunters examined the body, they found that Ruig's javelin had evidently grazed the tiger's forehead and drawn blood, which had run down into his eyes, and made him confused and uncertain. It was this which had made him so easy a prey; and Ruig was overwhelmed with joy to think that he had had a real share in the kill.

The first saber-tooth was an old one, ragged of coat, and with one of its great tusks missing, broken off at some time or other in a battle, or because of decay. Ruig's tiger, on the other hand, was young and perfect, measuring twenty feet from tip to tip, and having a magnificent pelt.

It was a very proud boy that accompanied the hunters back to camp that evening, walking by the side of his tiger, the end of its tail in his hand.

THE CAVES

CHAPTER IX

THE CAVES

LATE in the fall of the year, the village huts with their coverings of skin would become too cold for comfort, especially at night, and at that period the entire population of the settlement where Ruig lived would collect their household moveables, and take refuge in the caves found in the limestone cliffs, at some distance back from the river. These cliffs extended for miles from east to west, and as the cave-mouths faced the south, they received the full benefit of the sunshine, while the hills at the back shut off the chilling winds.

These caves were of different kinds. Some were truly caves, extending back for many hundred feet right into the heart of the rock, with branching chambers here and there on either side, and smooth walls and lofty ceilings.

The floors were of rock as well; but this was covered with an accumulation of earth, and mixed with this was an immense quantity of bones, large and small, of animals and birds, which had once made the cave their home and left their remains there when they died, or had been killed and brought into the cave by the bears and hyenas which undoubtedly once lived in these places before the men took possession of them. There were fragments of the skeletons of larger beasts, such as the mammoth and the woolly rhinoceros; and these must have been brought in by hunters, who, leaving the carcass on the prairie where it fell, had carried home the more eatable portions, and having removed the meat to be dried in the

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smoke and stored away for future use, had cracked the bones for the purpose of getting out the marrow, and had thrown the pieces on the ground, to be trodden under foot into the earth of the floor. For very many years this must have been going on; this accumulation was several feet in depth, as generation after generation of hunters, of forgotten races, must have lived in these caves, as those of Ruig's tribe were doing.

Some of the caves, however, were hardly more than shelters or grottos, formed by a recess under the lee of an over-hanging cliff, which served to keep out the rain and snow, and afforded protection from the wind, but were not deep enough to permit family life to be as comfortable and easy as in the large caverns. It was possible to build up in front a barricade or wall of stones, which helped in some degree to keep out the weather, and might on occasion serve also as a defense against marauding animals; for in the dead of winter these sometimes became desperate from hunger, and would not hesitate to attack human beings. At such times the cave was not merely a dwelling, it became a fort.

Ruig's father, being one of the prominent men of the tribe, was assigned one of the larger and more roomy caves for his winter home; and he took in with his own family old Graum, as he was sorry for the old man, crippled and lonely, with no one of his own kin to look out for him; and he also invited Narg, with his wife and her two children, to occupy one of the inner chambers of the cave, which was plenty large for a family of four, and had in addition the advantage of a chimney, which few of the caves possessed. This chimney, of course, was nothing but a crevice in the roof leading through to the upper air; but it gave ventilation, and enabled Narg's wife to build a fire in her kitchen without danger of suffocating the family in the smoke.

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Narg's children were about the age of Ruig, and the three were great playmates, inventing every kind of game to while away the time when they were snowbound, as often happened; and Narg was great fun, for he was tremendously goodnatured, and being a famous hunter, always had interesting things to tell about. One day he told the children how the cave was made. It had not been dug out of rock by men, as the children had always thought; for even if there had been proper tools, the labor would have been prodigious, making it an impossible task. But long, very long ago, said Narg, a little pool of water gathered, up on top of the plateau, in a hollow place in the ground, and trickled down into a crack in the rock itself. Some cold night the water froze solid, and split open the crack a little wider, and into the enlarged crevice more water trickled. By and by it made its way, following the seams in the rock, clear down through, and out at the base of the cliff. After a while it wore a regular channel; until at last all the surface water of the plateau found its way to this opening, pouring through in a larger and larger stream, eating out the softer portions of the rock, polishing the wall surfaces with the sand which it brought down with it; until a time came when for some cause or other the outlet of the pool above became blocked, and the water ceased to flow. Then the cave dried out, and became a refuge at first for animals, such as the bears and hyenas; and later for the men, who drove out the animals, and took possession for themselves. Even now in thawing weather the walls would drip with moisture; and old Graum complained of the terrific aches in his bones which rheumatism gave him, spending whole days muffled in a great pile of furs, in the warmest corner he could find, near the fire in Narg's part of the cave.

Mostly the life of the family was spent near the entrance

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of the cave, where could be found fresh air and light. The boys had helped repair the stone barrier across the entrance; and this was a circumstance for which all hands, on one night at least, were to have occasion to be devoutly thankful. Ruig's mother built her fire just inside this barrier. Supplies of various kinds—firewood, dried meat, the pelts of the animals brought in by the hunters—were stored in the corners of the inner cave. But the family life centered around the fire. Here Ruig's father and Narg chipped their flints, and carved their spearheads of ivory and bone. Here old Graum, with his array of gravers and planers, did his curious work in decoration and sculpture. Here the women plied their bone needles and thread of sinew, to make clothing for the family; and here the children played their various games. The one they liked best was played with a small bone image of the cave-bear, having holes drilled all over him. He was tied by a piece of thong to one end of a slender skewer of bone, and the game consisted in tossing him into the air as far as the thong permitted, and then trying to catch him on the point of the skewer. Narg's girl, whose name was Enga, was much cleverer at this than either of the boys, and was always twitting them for being so clumsy.

Every day when the weather permitted the men would go out hunting; but there would be whole weeks at a time when they were kept in by the fierce wind and deep snow. Winter was a hard season; it had its privations and its dangers; but it had its peculiar pleasures as well; and these the children appreciated to the full.

The snow would sometimes pile up before the mouth of their cave until it lay in great drifts higher than a man. The prevailing winds were from the north, which was toward the back of the cliffs; and when they carried the snow before them

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it would drop over the brink of the hill, and collect at its foot. More than a few mornings during the winter, the men and boys would find themselves compelled to tunnel their way out to daylight, the snow seeming like a great white curtain hanging before the cave-mouth. When this occurred it was always delightfully cosy and warm inside, and Graum would rub his rheumatic joints with exclamations of satisfaction.

When the days were somewhat warm, and the surface of the snow softened a little, freezing up again toward night, a crust would form on the drifts, strong enough to bear the weight of a boy or girl if they trod carefully. The ground sloped from the cliff toward the river, and the children never grew tired of coasting down the incline, sitting upon a wolf-skin with the fur side down, and gathering headway as they went until they skidded with a bump over the bank and out onto the ice of the river. At first they used to spin around a good deal, which made them giddy; but after a while they learned how to steer the wolf-skin by means of short sticks which they dug into the crust on either side. Curiously enough, here, too, little Enga was more expert than either of the boys; and Narg, who was fond of children, and liked to be around with them, was more skillful still. He would even stand erect on his wolf-skin, steering with a couple of spears; and although sometimes, owing to his weight, he broke through the crust and was spilled in the snow, he never seemed to tire of the sport, and would leave whatever he was doing to join in the fun.

Graum had once had an adventure with a pack of wolves, which chased him through the forest as he was returning from a visit to his traps. For a time he kept ahead of them by throwing away one thing after another; the rabbits which he had snared and had hung over his shoulder in a bag, then his

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cap, his mittens, and at last his heavy coat. The pack would stop for a few moments to worry each article as it fell in the snow, and then would take after him again, though he gained a few rods with each delay. At last he reached the river, and raced down it upon the ice toward the camp, which lay some distance below. Graum was wearing shoes with soles of woven willow-twigs, and these gave him some foothold upon the ice, while the wolves would slip and slither as they rounded the curves of the stream. At last the camp came in sight around the bend. The wolves were upon Graum's very heels; putting forth his last ounce of strength, the hunter managed to keep ahead a moment longer. Just as he came abreast of the huts, he braced his feet and dug his heels into the ice, thus putting on brakes and slackening speed; while the wolves, carried headlong by their rush, and unable to check themselves, slid past him, snapping their jaws in vain attempts to seize him. By the time they could turn and start back, Graum was up the bank and in safety, while the hunters came pouring out of their shelters and sent a shower of javelins among the pack, more than one of which went down, the others retreating in disorder.

Of all the winter pastimes, by far the best was to sit around the fire in the evening and listen to stories such as these; for not only did Graum possess a large stock of them, but he told them so graphically that one could almost imagine himself an actor in the events which were described; and Ruig used in his dreams to live through many an exciting episode of hunt or battle, the story of which had been in his ears when he went to bed.

THE INVADERS

CHAPTER X

THE INVADERS

AMONG the stories which Graum would tell as they all sat around the fire in the evening were some about the different kinds of animals and birds which in time past had made the caves their home.

In seasons when the cold was severe and food hard to come at, it was not an unknown thing for wolves and hyenas to seek the shelter of these rock dwellings, where they might at least keep from freezing; and when they had become desperate from hunger, they would actually attack the people who lived there, in spite of their instinctive dread of man. This possibility, remote as it seemed, was destined very soon to show itself a fact; and Ruig became not merely a spectator of it, but a chief actor, who was forced to play a very considerable part.

That year the winter was very long, and the north wind blew persistently, cutting through the thickest furs, and forcing everybody to keep pretty closely indoors. Fortunately there was a good stock of firewood, for all through the fall of the year it had been systematically gathered and stored in the back of the cave, where it would keep dry. After a while, the rock walls became thoroughly warmed, and would give out a good deal of heat, even after the fires had died down at night, so that Narg's and Ruig's families did not really suffer much from cold as long as they kept closely at home.

But for the boys, this inaction and monotony soon became very wearisome, accustomed as they were to active life out of

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doors; and they consequently grew restless, and made all sorts of excuses to get outside, though they were always warned not to wander too far away.

One day Ruig and his playmates had organized a make-believe hunt, tracking various animals through the snow, though they did not dare follow too fast, for fear that they might come to close quarters with some beast which would prove dangerous.

Toward night, they returned in a great hurry, and breathless with excitement, saying that they had found the trail of a large pack of hyenas, which were evidently taking shelter in the woods near by. The men of the two families were away at the time, and the only adult at home was Graum, who was complaining of rheumatism, and was really very stiff and lame, and hardly able to be about.

He listened carefully to what the boys had to say, and then gave directions to build up the barrier of rock across the cave-mouth, which had been allowed to fall into some disrepair. The boys thought this great fun, and lugged big stones from every part of the cave until the wall was about three feet high all across; but even then Graum was not satisfied, but grumbled to himself as he saw to it that the fire was well fed, so as to burn clear and bright, while an extra quantity of wood was piled close at hand.

In good season everybody curled up among the furs for a night's sleep. The cold grew more intense at sundown, at which time Narg and Ruig's father had not yet returned from their hunting trip; and Graum kept one eye open to watch the fire, as well as to see that no unwelcome intruder appeared at the cave-mouth. But even Graum must have fallen asleep for a moment, for all at once Ruig found himself on his feet, startled from his dreams by a series of hideous yells, which he

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knew could come only from the throat of a hyena. The fire had burned low; but by the dim light he could distinguish a dozen ungainly furry bodies just clambering over the rocks at the entrance of the cave. The hyenas, rendered bold by starvation, were rushing the barrier, and in a second would be among them.

Ruig shouted as loud as he could in the hope of frightening the marauders. The others were awake in an instant, and the women shrank back into a corner, shielding Enga behind them. Graum gave a full-throated roar, and threw some light wood on the fire, which quickly blazed up and lighted the scene. He then seized his weapons, and hurled a spear into the pack, which broke momentarily as one of its number went down with its ribs pierced through; then they rushed upon their fallen companion, whose body had scarcely touched the ground before it was completely covered by a struggling mass of hyenas, which with gleaming eyes and slavering jaws tore it to pieces in a twinkling, and then retired a little way, licking their chops and snarling as they faced the defenders of the cave.

Ruig tried to count the pack, and saw that it numbered at least twenty—great gaunt high-shouldered beasts, any one of them more than a match for a boy. And there were only two boys and a half-crippled man to stand them off. He felt no fear in spite of this disparity in numbers, but ground his teeth with anger, only wondering how the three were to cope with the twenty. Graum was roaring again, and snatching up bits of rock was hurling them among the pack, which only dodged and snarled, without retreating, and was evidently preparing for another rush upon the barrier. Quickly Ruig and the other boy piled their light javelins ready to hand. Graum had a sheaf of spears; and he now gave the word that

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they were to wait for his signal, and then cast their weapons one after another into the pack as rapidly as possible. Even as he spoke, the rush came. Roaring his command, Graum transfixes another huge brute in midair, as he sprang over the barrier of rocks. Ruig's first cast also found its mark; and then he went down under the impact of a heavy furry form, hearing the jaws snap together close to his face, and inhaling the fetid breath of the beast as they rolled over one another upon the floor. Giving himself up for lost, Ruig nevertheless instinctively scrambled to one side, and was immensely relieved when his enemy, which had fallen into the glowing embers of the fire, dashed away into the night with savage yells, leaving behind a great smell of scorching fur.

Ruig was on his feet again in an instant, javelin in hand, and a strange sight met his eyes. At the barrier, and in the very act of mounting it, were a dozen hyenas. Confronting them were three defenders—old Graum, balancing himself upon his crippled stumps, his huge axe heaved up to strike; Narg's boy, crouching a little to the rear, his long spear in readiness, his eyes darting here and there among the invaders; and with these two, Narg's wife, in one fist a jagged handstone, in the other a club; her hair all about her face, her mouth open with a fierce expression, as, braced upon her strong legs, her feet planted wide apart, she awaited the charge of the hyenas. Back in the farthest corner of the cave crouched Ruig's mother with little Enga in her arms. A warning shout from Graum, as his axe crashed through the skull of one of the pack. A second spitted itself upon the spear of Narg's boy, who, unable to withdraw his weapon in time, and tripping over the long shaft as the dying hyena writhed upon the floor, went down under the weight of two great beasts. Rooted with terror to the spot, Ruig saw the great axe flash again in the

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firelight, and miss its mark; while Graum, overbalanced by his blow, and standing precariously on his crippled feet, stumbled to his knees. All seemed lost; but Narg's wife was there. Throwing herself astride of her boy, she met the springing hyenas single-handed. With a sweep of her club she stunned the first one; seizing another by the long shaggy mane which grew upon its shoulders, she struck fiercely with her jagged handstone at its eyes, until, crazed and blinded, it sought to pull itself out of the fray, when Ruig awoke from his stupor, and nailed it with his javelin to the floor. Graum was up again and had recovered his axe; but the cave seemed full of hyenas. Desperately the defenders struck into the confused mass of their enemies; but their arms were tiring, they were dazed by the shifting of the struggling bodies. The end seemed close at hand when a great shouting arose at the cave-mouth, and Ruig's father and Narg came springing down over the barrier into the cave. Alighting on his feet, Ruig's father instantly balanced himself, his eyes darting about him, his keen axe poised. A sweep to one side, then to the other—and two hyenas went down, with split skull and broken spine. It seemed as though the axe had barely touched them, so well directed and skillful were the blows.

Narg, on the other hand, was a fighter of a different sort. Roaring as he landed in the very midst of the surprised hyenas, he threw away his weapons and attacked the enemy with his bare hands. Seizing one great beast by a hind leg, he swung it up above his head, brained it against the rocky wall, and hurled the carcass among the pack. Falling bodily upon another, he crushed it under his weight, and choked its life out as it lay beneath him upon the floor. He seemed to tower to the roof and fill the cave. Rushing upon a third hyena, with one hand at its foreleg and the other at its jaw, he bent

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back the snarling head and broke its neck. By this time, the other defenders had recovered their breath, and something of their presence of mind, and hastened to the assistance of their rescuers; but the hyenas had had enough. Spitting and snarling, they dashed from the cave into the darkness, leaving eight of their number dead behind them, and making a bloody trail as they went upon the snow. Two or three of them turned when at a little distance, and looked hungrily back toward the cave; but when Ruig's father whirled a flaming brand among them, they too disappeared after their companions; and the fight was over.

It seems that the two hunters, who had appeared upon the scene in the very nick of time, had crossed the trail of the hyenas a mile from the cave, and seeing that it led toward the camp, had followed it with all speed. Owing to the deep snow, the going had been heavy, and they had not made as rapid progress as they otherwise would. At some distance they had heard the sounds of battle, and redoubled their efforts; but had they arrived a minute later, there is no telling what they might have found.

All the defenders were pretty well exhausted by the excitement, no less than by their exertions, and all had scratches from either claws or teeth. Old Graum had bruised himself badly when he fell among the rocks, sustaining quite a cut upon the head besides. But after a while all were nearly themselves again, and when their hurts had been attended to, and they were comfortably seated near the blazing fire, the boys at least took great pleasure in fighting the battle over again, rehearsing each episode for the benefit of the rescuers, who had not witnessed the most thrilling events of all. The men listened with much interest, and when Graum put in a special word for both of the boys, telling how well they had stood by

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and obeyed orders, the hunters gave them nods of approval which pleased them mightily.

At first it seemed strange that none of the occupants of nearby caves had come to the assistance of the beleaguered company; but it appeared afterward that while some of the noise had been heard, it had been interpreted as the men attacking the hyenas, instead of the hyenas attacking the men; and beside, as both Ruig's father and Narg were believed to be at home, no danger was anticipated; so that the neighbors, having turned an ear for a moment to the sounds of battle, had then snuggled down again into their furs and gone to sleep, thinking that the hyenas would be well taken care of, as indeed they were.

THE GREAT MYSTERY

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT MYSTERY

THE day after the fight with the hyenas, old Graum did not leave his bed of rushes and furs, but lay there complaining of bruises and strains. He had overexerted himself in the defense of the cave, and had beside that, caught cold; and Ruig's mother, who was looking after him, was afraid that he was going to be a pretty sick man. There was, however, little that she could do, aside from keeping him warm by means of heated stones, which she placed in his bed; and moistening his lips now and then so as to allay his thirst. As the day wore on, it became evident that the old man was seriously ill, and by night he was very feverish and delirious, so that the others had to take turns in watching him, and replacing the covers which he was continually throwing off. On the following day he was no better; at evening there was a sudden change for the worse; and at dawn the brave old hunter breathed his last.

Graum's death was a great blow to Ruig, for he had become very fond of the old man, spending many an interesting hour in his company listening to stories, and trying to remember his advice. He could not make himself believe that the silent form under the skin coverings was his friend, who so short a while ago had been so full of life, as he swung his deadly axe among the leaping hyenas. But Graum would never speak nor move again; and Ruig felt very lonely, as he sat by himself in a far corner of the cave, and tried to understand what it all meant.

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One thing was certain: something had gone away from Graum which had been there, a necessary part of him, only a few hours before. His strength had gone. His intelligence had gone. His affection and his memory, his power of shrewd reasoning about things, all had vanished, and nobody had seen them go. All that any one could see was what lay there under the covering of skins; and *that* was not Graum—it was what Graum had lived in for a while, and left behind him when he had to go. Perhaps the real Graum was outside somewhere, waiting until his body could catch up with him again.

Vague ideas like these occupied Ruig's mind, and were of some degree of comfort to him, so that when the medicine-man and his assistants came to make the final preparations for the burial, Ruig was himself again, and watched with a great deal of interest everything that went on.

The medicine-man was a very awesome and striking figure. He was clothed in flowing furs, a mask of thin membrane made from the skins of birds covering his face below the eyes, and a hood or helmet consisting of the skull and skin of a saber-tooth tiger causing him to seem much taller than he really was. He wore a triple necklace of claws of the cave-bear, hanging nearly to his waist, and carried in one hand a beautifully carved ivory baton, showing that he was a chief. In the other hand he grasped a rattle, the inflated bladder of a wild boar with a few small pebbles inside; and this he swung vigorously about by means of a short handle, to which it was attached by a thong of deerskin, as he paused at the entrance of the cave, to drive out by this means the evil spirits which had been responsible for Graum's death, and might be still lurking in the vicinity to see what further mischief they could do.

Satisfied at last apparently that his object had been

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accomplished, the medicine-man slowly advanced to the corner where Graum's body lay, lifted the covering from the face, and gazed down intently upon it. He then drew from his pouch a small box of reindeer horn, and took from this with finger and thumb a pinch of reddish powder, which he sifted into the air, watching to see where and how it finally settled upon Graum's face. After a moment he blew the powder lightly away, straightened himself, and motioned to the four old women who were his assistants to lift the body from the corner, and place it on a mat of skins in the center of the floor. This done the assistants then retired, and the medicine-man began a slow dance about the body, crouching low and stretching his legs far out in front of him, as he took each step. After several rounds in one direction, he reversed his march, and hopped around the other way. This must have been very exhausting work, for Ruig could see the perspiration streaming down the medicine-man's face from under the tiger-skin helmet; and he was relieved when the dance ceased, and the dancer stood erect and motionless at the foot of the rug on which lay the body of Graum. After a moment he again felt in his pouch, producing this time a handful of light feathers, which he blew into the air; and when all had finally settled upon the floor, the medicine-man with the point of a bone skewer scratched lines upon the dirt from one to the other, thus forming a sort of geometric pattern which he studied with great care, muttering to himself as he did so, and waving his hands to and fro in a strange and mysterious manner.

Satisfied at last as it seemed with the omens, he scattered the feathers, scraped out the pattern with his foot, and motioned the assistants to approach, while he himself, his own part done, placed his baton and rattle upon the ground, and

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drawing his robe over his head, sank into a corner of the cave, a motionless heap of furs.

All this time Ruig had been watching with intense interest; but when the four skinny old hags gathered eagerly about Graum's body, and groped in their bundles for the instruments of their craft, the dim lamp which one of them had lighted throwing huge wavering shadows upon the wall, he was only too glad to creep away, finally taking to his heels in a panic of superstitious fear, and never stopping until he reached a group of other boys who were engaged in some commonplace occupation which made things seem natural again.

The next day, word went round that the burial ceremonies were to take place at noon; and accordingly, just before the shadow of the cliff became the narrowest, showing that the sun was nearly overhead, the tribe assembled in two long parallel lines, and stood silently watching the entrance of the cave where the body lay, now ready for its interment. Just at noon, four men appeared at the cave-mouth: Ruig's father, Narg, Huth, and Dourm—the closest friends of the dead man—carrying a litter made of poles laced together with rawhide, on which was placed the corpse, in a sitting position, the knees drawn up close against the chest, the arms folded across and strapped there with thongs, the head bowed forward upon the knees. Upon the head, so closely as to form a sort of cap, were fastened numerous strings of small shells. About the neck was a triple necklace of cave-bear claws, from which dangled several carved medallions of ivory; and except for these decorations, and the usual loin-cloth, the body was entirely naked, but had been thickly smeared with a coating of red clay found on the river-bank, so that from a distance it seemed dressed in a tightly fitting garment of some red material.

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On the litter were piled rich furs, for warmth on the long journey which Graum was supposed to have before him. Various jars of pottery contained food; and lying alongside were the weapons of the old hunter, which he would need in the faraway country to which he was bound.

Slowly the bearers came down the slope from the cave, between the lines of people, who averted their eyes in respect as the litter passed them, and then fell in in a rude procession to follow the body to the burial-place.

This burial-place was a large grotto at one end of the long cliff in which the caves were, facing the west, and already containing many bodies placed there from time to time, but being roomy enough to accommodate many more. Arriving here, the bearers gently lowered the litter to the ground; lifted Graum's body and bore it reverently into the grotto, loosening the straps from its arms and legs and laying it upon its side in a shallow trench-like excavation scooped out in the earthen floor, the face toward the setting sun, the knees drawn up toward the body, and the arms flexed so as to assume almost the position taken by the elders when they were in the attitude of prayer. Near the right hand was placed a little heap of the reddish ochre with which the body had been smeared. On either side of the head was set up endwise in the ground a small slab of stone. The furs were laid in the trench, the axe and javelins placed ready to hand; the jars of food were set by; the earth which had been removed from the trench was then piled over the whole; and the mortal body of the old hunter was left to face the great mystery into which his spirit had already entered.

Many perplexing questions crowded the mind of Ruig as he made his way back to camp. How was the body which lay buried in the trench, with all its possessions about it, to

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rejoin the spirit which had once animated it, and caused it to move and speak? There must be such a reunion of the two; for the body was powerless to wrap the furs about its shoulders, help itself from the jars of food, or grasp the javelin and the axe which lay beside it. Perhaps the vanished spirit was only out scouting over the long trail, and would return under cover of the darkness and again take possession of its former home. But on the other hand, perhaps there would be no need of that; for after all, was not the real Graum, the person whom Ruig had known and loved, gone from sight out into the great mystery, free at last to do things which it could not do as long as the old tired crippled body held it down? Perhaps it would not need the supplies, the furs and the weapons which had been left for it in the grave. True, all human beings, as Ruig knew them, did need such things; but the unseen regions into which the real Graum had entered might be altogether different in ever so many ways from the world as it lay about one here. As to that point, nobody could be sure, for so far as Ruig knew no one had ever come back to describe that other world. The matter could not be settled by argument, nor by wondering about it. It did, however, give one some great thoughts—and life seemed somehow a pleasanter thing when you had the notion that it was not all at an end when the body was laid away like Graum's in the grotto, but went on under better conditions somewhere else.

All this was pretty deep for the mind of a boy; and Ruig soon dismissed it from his thoughts, saying to himself that inasmuch as he could not solve the mystery, he would leave it to take care of itself.

It may be that this was the very wisest thing he could have done.

BRAM THE PROPHET

CHAPTER XII

BRAM THE PROPHET

THREE was one man in the village of whom Ruig was always a little afraid. This was Bram, who lived alone in a hut near the cliffs, and seldom mingled with the others except when a hunt was on, at which times every able-bodied man must be on hand.

Bram was a sour-looking, silent man, about fifty years old, with piercing black eyes which never seemed to look *at* you, but rather through you and beyond you, as though seeing things in the far distance which other people did not know anything about. Ruig was not the only one who stood in awe of this man, for all of the children, and many of the older people as well, had the same feeling. Bram had the reputation of being a prophet; that is, of knowing that things were going to happen far in advance of their happening. Old Graum, to be sure, had in a certain degree shown himself to be a prophet in the matter of the bow and arrow; but this was a question rather of shrewdness than of any special gift. Bram, on the contrary, was supposed to be in possession of some faculty which enabled him to forecast the future by instinct, instead of from experience and reason, as had been the case with Graum. It was this popular belief concerning Bram, together with his silent and mysterious manner, which made people dread him, as they are always inclined to dread what they fail to understand.

Ruig was out one day exploring some of the numerous caves in the limestone cliff back of the camp; when turning a

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sudden corner, he came upon Bram, who was taking out of the fire, by means of two sticks which he used as tongs, something which resembled a red-hot coal, but which Bram treated with great care, laying it down on a flat stone, and bending over it with every appearance of great interest. Ruig, from where he was standing, could see nothing peculiar about this object, and as he looked on, it gradually lost its glow, and became like any bit of rock which had been blackened in the fire. Bram, however, continued to scrutinize it, finally poking it into a puddle of water to cool it, and then picking it up to examine it again. Ruig had unconsciously edged nearer and nearer, and his shadow across the floor of the cave finally attracted the attention of Bram, who sprang to his feet with an exclamation of surprise.

Seeing that Ruig was alone, he relaxed, and then Ruig was amazed at being invited in to sit down by the fire. Still somewhat afraid, yet not daring to refuse, he complied, and sat for a few moments while Bram fixed upon him his strange gaze, which seemed to penetrate right through him to the rocky wall against which he leaned.

The silence lasted for quite a while; and just as Ruig, becoming nervous, was on the point of jumping up and running for it, Bram turned his eyes away, and then picking up the bit of rock which he had been examining with such care, he handed it to Ruig, who mechanically took it and looked it over.

It was not after all just a common bit of rock. It had in it seams or veins, from which some soft substance had apparently melted and run out; and this substance lay in streaks where it had cooled upon the surface of the rock. These streaks were of a reddish color, and showed the mark of scratches when Ruig tried them with his finger-nail. But he

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could make nothing of it, and handed the stone back to Bram with a silent shake of the head.

Bram's grim features relaxed in something like a smile; and then, stretching his sinewy legs out before him on the floor of the cave, and leaning back comfortably against the wall, he began to talk just as any other man would talk, only he was a thousand times more interesting than any one to whom Ruig had ever listened, not excepting Graum himself.

The hunters described events in which they had taken part, and told of things which they themselves had seen; but Bram's talk was broader and deeper, for he saw into the reasons for things, and drew conclusions from what he had seen as to what might happen in the future.

He began on this occasion by talking about the stone which he had been heating in the fire. The substance which had melted and run out of the seams or veins of this stone, he called a "metal," a word which he had invented to apply to this particular thing. The discovery of this metal, and how to make use of it, was destined to prove of tremendous importance to every member of the tribe. If only enough of it could be found, and ways devised by which it might be melted out of the rock, it could be worked into spear-heads, arrow-points, and knives, and everything of that sort which now had to be laboriously chipped out of flint, or carved out of horn and bone. Moulds could be made into which the metal could be run, or it could be softened in the fire and then hammered into any desired shape. It could be sharpened, too, much more easily, and could be made to take a keener edge than the flint and bone weapons now in use; and there were countless other purposes to which it might be put. Once men had learned how to do these things, they would be at one leap a hundred times farther in advance of the present age than the present

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age was in advance of that when bone and horn implements were unknown, but everything had to be made of flint or wood. The cliffs where they were sitting must be full of this metal, and there was no telling how much of it there might be underground; the supply must be practically unlimited.

As Ruig sat dumfounded by the strangeness of this new idea, and utterly unable to realize all that it must mean, Bram went on to speak of other things; and Ruig's astonishment increased as he now saw that what people took to be in Bram an uncanny power, was really nothing but unusual intelligence, and the ability to think and to express his thoughts in a logical and orderly way.

For example: Bram was now speaking of the great abandoned camp some miles away, where successive generations of hunters had made their headquarters, settling down in the same place for scores, even hundreds, of years, for the sake of the game, principally wild horses, which had once abounded there. Beneath the soil all about the camp were thousands and thousands of skeletons of horses, in layer upon layer; and now the game had been all killed off, and the people themselves had been forced to migrate in order to escape starvation. Just as long as men act in such short-sighted ways, said Bram, they will always be wanderers, with no permanent home. How much better to spare the game and allow it to increase, instead of slaughtering twenty times as much as can possibly be used, and leaving it to rot on the prairie!

Here Bram paused for a moment and when he went on it was with so astonishing a proposition that Ruig could scarcely believe his ears.

Why not, said Bram, catch some of these wild horses and tame them, making them carry the loads when the tribe

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moved, instead of burdening their own backs with them? Why not learn to ride on the horses, and thus be able to travel faster and farther, and with less fatigue, than was possible for any one now? Why not tame some of the wild dogs, too, and make of them companions and friends, training them to guard the huts, and to pull down game, instead of hunting them as wolves are hunted, for the purpose of killing them off? Why not learn how to grow the berries and fruits now found in a wild state, and stripped wholesale from the bushes and trees until the supply was absolutely exhausted?

If such things as these were done, said Bram—and there was no reason why they should not all be done—think what the result would be upon the tribe. They could pick some good spot and settle down permanently; there would always be game in the neighborhood; there would always be a supply of fruits and berries; they would have the assistance of the dogs and horses in hunting, and in many other ways as well. No longer being anxious about their food supply, they would have leisure to get out the metal from the rock, and work it. They could improve the building of the huts, and the arrangement of the village. They could surround it with a stockade for protection, a thing which now was hardly worth the effort, since they were compelled to move every little while to find new hunting grounds. In other words, life would be a settled and permanent thing, orderly in its methods, instead of as now haphazard, temporary and confused; and they would have time to develop and improve themselves in a great many ways, as they could never do as long as life was an anxious struggle from day to day to maintain existence and to secure the bare necessities of life, exhausting in this effort every energy and leaving neither time nor strength to use in other ways. But if the tribe could be sure of plenty of food from its own flocks

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and its own gardens; if it could economize both time and strength through the help of the animals; and if it could utilize the metal in such ways as Bram had suggested; then, said he, it might go on to invent or discover things of which it now had never dreamed, and find methods of living which would make it a hundred times more comfortable and powerful, and able to hold its own without worry against all enemies —beasts, climate, or men.

Bram left off speaking, and fixed Ruig with his strange glance. After a few moments, however, he appeared to have forgotten all about him, and paid no attention when the boy got up from his place and slipped away through the gathering dusk.

A GREAT DISCOVERY

CHAPTER XIII

A GREAT DISCOVERY

RUG and the boys used sometimes to go fishing in the stream which ran by the edge of the camp, and which when swollen by the spring and fall rains or by the melting snow became almost a river. Ordinarily, however, it was quiet enough, and not any wider than you could toss a good-sized rock across without much effort. The boys would hunt out the eddies under the bank, and the quieter spots where the stream widened into a pool, and there they would drop in their tackle, and often bring home a creditable catch.

Their line was a thin string made by twisting the fibers of water-plants, as the women knew how to do, or perhaps a number of fine sinews fastened together. A stick served for a fishing rod; but hooks they had none. Instead they used a straight bit of bone an inch or so in length, sharpened at both ends, and having a groove around it at the middle, so that the line might be tied to it without danger of slipping. The bait was stuck on this sharpened bit of bone; but as this had no barb on it, but was perfectly smooth, the fish could very easily steal the bait without much danger to themselves, unless they were greedy enough to bolt the whole thing, in which case the bone would be likely to stick crosswise in their gullet and hold them.

Many a good fish, however, slipped off and was lost, so that this sport was not very popular among the boys, who were naturally impatient; not nearly as popular as hunting; nor

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was it made much of by the men, for game was so plentiful that all one needed to do was to go out a little way from camp and knock it over.

The fish then, being little disturbed, multiplied very rapidly, and the pools and eddies were full of big fellows who could be plainly seen in the deep clear water. Ruig used to love to lie on his stomach on the bank and look down on them, seeing them dart to and fro with motions of their fins so quick that the eye could scarcely follow them; or poise themselves motionless just above the bottom, heads upstream, maintaining position against the current by means of a gentle sculling of their tails. Toward evening, or on cloudy days, they would swim nearer the surface, and sometimes leap partly out of the water in pursuit of gnats and flies.

Ruig was a good swimmer, and had often thought that he would like to be a fish; but as he watched the big fellows inhabiting the pools, he began by degrees to entertain a wish of a different sort, namely, that he had some kind of tackle by means of which he might pull them up, without losing them just as they reached the surface of the water. Like every fisherman, he imagined these to be the very biggest of all; and he used to dream of bringing home a catch in which each fish was so long that he had to hold it up at arm's length to keep its tail from dragging on the ground. This, he thought, might really become true, if he had the right kind of tackle; and he often tried to think of some way in which his fishing gear might be improved.

Now and then he and the other boys had thrown javelins at some huge grandfather of a fish seen near the surface, or had tried to transfix him with a spear; but as the points of both spear and javelin were straight and smooth, even when a fish was struck, the weapon pulled right out again, with no

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result except the wounding of the fish, which might indeed be found afterward floating belly uppermost in an eddy of the stream, but which more often disappeared in deep water leaving a trail of bloody bubbles behind.

Bram, the prophet, had foretold the ultimate extinction of game because of the wasteful methods of the hunters, who generally killed a great deal more than they could use, with no thought for the future. Ruig had noticed this more than once, when he had seen the carcass of a deer or of a wild horse left where it fell, only a few small cuts of meat being taken from the choicest parts, and the rest left to spoil, or to feed the hyenas or the buzzards. It was with this thought in mind that he was one day lying according to his habit on the bank of the river, basking in the sun, and idly watching the fish as they glided about below him in the clear depths of the water. What a vast number there must be in there! How rapidly they multiplied, and how fast they grew! There was an inexhaustible supply of good food there, if it could only be gotten out; and Ruig racked his brain to devise some way in which this might be accomplished. As nothing occurred to him just then, however, he strung a couple of fish which he had pulled up earlier in the afternoon on a long switch, from which he had trimmed off all the twigs except one stub at the lower end, which projected like the short side of a V, the long side being the switch itself. Slipping this longer end through the gills of a fish, and out through its mouth, he would slide it smoothly down along the switch until it brought up against the stub, which prevented it from falling off.

On reaching home, Ruig proceeded to take his catch off this carrier, naturally enough drawing them up along the switch instead of trying to get them off over the stub at the lower end; and as he did this, a great idea flashed upon him—

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an idea which would work a revolution in fishing, would make a vast difference in hunting, which would be deeply affected by it; and would create a new habit in the life of the entire tribe. Not that Ruig saw all this at the time; all that he saw was that a crooked bone shaped like a V might be used on the fish-line instead of the straight bone tied by the middle to the string, which would instead be fastened to one arm of the V; the bait would be stuck upon the other arm; and once a fish got this crooked bone in its mouth, there was a good chance that it could be pulled up, and its struggles would only serve to hook it more deeply still.

It was too late that evening to do what Ruig wanted to do, but almost before daylight the following morning he was out with a flint carver and a piece of bone, trying to shape the new implement as he saw it with his mind's eye. He was too excited, and too much in a hurry to make a smooth and complete job; but in some fashion he did trim his bit of bone into the shape he wanted, and scampered away to the river to try out his new invention.

Passing his line through a tiny hole which he had drilled in the longer arm of his bone V, he impaled a shred of meat upon the other, and then with his heart in his mouth swung his line over into the stream. Letting it sink part way down toward the bottom, he then very carefully drew it up a trifle, and repeated the process several times without any result. He had become so accustomed to losing his bait that he was afraid this had happened again, and began to pull in to see if such was the case; when just as his hook was about to break the surface, there came a rush and a splash; his pole was almost dragged from his hand; and, as involuntarily he jerked it toward him, he experienced the thrill which every fisherman knows—the sensation of a weight at the end of the line;

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a live weight, which plunged and fought him until his wrist was lame and his palm sore with the friction of his pole. But Ruig held fast, and at last pulled his prize out upon the bank—a silver monster half as long as his arm. Eagerly he bent over him—and saw that his invention had in this case at least proved a success, for the curved point of the hook had struck into one side of the upper jaw, and emerging through the eye-socket, had hung the fish up in such a way that he had no possible chance of shaking free. As long as the line held, he was caught; and the twisted sinew was strong.

Elated by this first success, Ruig tried again; and although to his surprise he lost one or two fish, still he hooked four or five sizable ones, and carried them home in triumph, to show them to his father, and tell him of his new invention, which he exhibited with all an inventor's pride.

Ruig's father was a man of few words, and said nothing very much at first, but only reached out his hand for the hook, rude and clumsy as it was, turning it over and studying it carefully on every side. He ran his thumb along it, tried its point, examined the eye into which the line was fastened, and then picking up one of Ruig's fish, he passed the hook through its jaw, and holding it off the ground by means of the line, shook it in order to see whether it was easy to dislodge the fish. After several trials, it seemed clear that only when there was a steady strain upon the line could one feel reasonably sure of landing his catch; for the upward turn of the hook was smooth, like the old-fashioned straight bone; and a leap on the part of the fish, or a momentary slackening of the line, might result in the slipping of the game from the hook. As Ruig studied this, he could understand how even with this new contrivance a number of his fish had gotten away; and

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he realized that there was something more needed, to make loss practically impossible once the hook was in.

He pondered this very thoughtfully, but could get no light upon it; nor could his father, although he sat for a long while with the hook in one hand and his flint knife in the other. Ruig meanwhile busied himself in shaping a much smaller hook, which this time he did very neatly; and then taking his first attempt from his father in order to compare the two, he laid them side by side in the palm of his hand, altering their relative position in different ways without any special object in doing so.

Idly his father looked on; when suddenly he caught Ruig's wrist as he was about to shift the hooks once more, studied their position for a moment, then nodded his head, and taking from his pouch a flat piece of bone, the shoulder-blade of some animal, he began to shape it rapidly with his flint knife. Ruig watched him, wondering what he was about; and soon he saw that his father had hit upon the solution of the problem. This new hook, as it took final shape, was almost exactly like his first attempt; only, instead of being smooth, just tapering to a point, this point bent back upon itself at an acute angle, thus making a very small inverted V upon the short arm of the larger V which was represented by the hook. The large V would easily pierce the jaw of the fish; but it would be prevented from slipping out again by the barb, or small V, which would catch and hold it.

Eager to test the idea, the two inventors hastened once more to the river and, having pulled up several fish without losing one, found that even when one wanted to get the hook out it was not easily done on account of the barb.

News of the invention spread rapidly through the camp; and soon nearly all the boys, as well as many of the men, had

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whittled out for themselves hooks on the improved pattern, and were trying their luck along the river. Before night, Ruig's father had gone a step further in the application of the new idea. He had made a bone tip for a javelin with a barb on it like that on the fish-hook; and poising this above the pool in which the biggest fish loved to lurk, he harpooned one of them, and hauled him out in triumph by means of the long shaft which he held in his hand. By the next day Huth had filed tiny barbs on his arrow-heads; and Narg had improved upon the single-barbed harpoon by cutting three or four barbs on either side of the blade of his favorite spear.

Thus the simple idea which had come to the mind of Ruig by noting the angle made by a switch and a twig, had produced as its result a new pattern of hunting weapon much more efficacious than the old one with its straight point, which made it necessary to kill the game by a series of stabs. Now the weapon would remain in the wound, imbedded in the flesh, or locked behind the ribs, bringing the animal down much more quickly than before; while the barbed hook had added, it might almost be said, an entire new department to the hunt, by insuring in a very short time the catch of a quantity of fish sufficient to justify the industry of smoking or curing them on raised platforms over the fire. In a small way this had been done before; but now it became a principal occupation, in which even the children might help; and the stock of food thus prepared was stored carefully away against the long months of winter, when the river was locked in ice, and game was scarce and poor.

THE BATTLE OF THE MONSTERS

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF THE MONSTERS

IT was the custom in the camp for the boys to be exercised for at least a couple of hours each day in the use of the various weapons, for in more than one sense their lives depended upon skill with the javelin, the spear, the axe, and even the throwing-stone. They were dependent upon game for food, and, with the exception of a few kinds of animals usually caught in traps, this game supply must be procured through the use of weapons.

In another sense also life depended upon this skill; for it might become necessary for them to defend themselves with axe and spear against the attack of a boar, a wolf, or even a woolly rhinoceros. The mammoth, bear, and tiger were dangerous only when roused or cornered; but even these they might sometime be compelled to face; and so no pains were spared by the hunters to instruct the boys in the proper handling of their weapons.

Days when the men were away upon expeditions, the boys would frequently organize expeditions of their own, and led by the older ones, they would go trailing along the paths which led in all directions from the drinking-places, hunting small animals, such as rabbits, which were very numerous along the edge of the woods, or, best of all, making believe that they were after a saber-tooth or a rhinoceros, which they would eventually surround and make an end of with their spears and darts.

At such times as these the boys would really act as hun-

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ters should, for they had been well drilled in such matters as keeping to leeward of the game, so that their scent might not betray them; in crawling flat on their stomachs through the grass with hardly a ripple to mark their passage; and in spreading out fanwise or in a circle in order to attack their quarry from all sides at once.

On one particular occasion, the boys had traveled to a water-hole a couple of miles from the village where game of all kinds used to come down to drink. They were supposedly in pursuit of a mammoth which had been several times seen in the neighborhood, and was believed to have his home near by; and taking proper precautions, they were all lying low behind a ridge not far from the water-hole, a gentle air fanning their faces as they gazed out eagerly through a fringe of grass to watch for their prey.

On the opposite side of the pool, the ground rose gradually to a small plateau a couple of hundred yards long, and about as wide, and beyond this again it sloped gently up toward some woods which stood a quarter of a mile farther on. It was toward these woods that the boys were looking; for out from among the big trees might appear at any moment the giant beast which they were supposed to be stalking. Who could tell but he might actually show himself, and a genuine hunt be on, instead of the sham one which their imagination had pictured? Delicious shivers traveled up and down the spines of the young hunters as they waited; and each one planned what he would do in case reality took the place of fancy.

It was when their eyes were becoming blinded by being constantly strained upon one point, and when the sun, now almost directly overhead, was commencing to scorch their naked backs, that an extraordinary thing occurred; and the

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boys became witnesses of a sight so unusual and so stupendous that the oldest hunter had never seen one like it, nor heard of its happening before.

As they still gazed toward the distant woods, out from among the trees slowly advanced the mammoth of their dreams. Leisurely he swung along the well-worn trail leading to the water-hole, his trunk swaying before him, his ears fanning away the swarms of flies which hung around him, the immense tusks which protruded from his jaws curling gracefully up and back upon themselves like hoops of ivory. As the great beast came on, he grumbled gently in his throat, in anticipation perhaps of the pleasant drink which awaited him, or of the bath which he would take in the pool, rolling in the cool mud, and spraying his heated flanks with water. The drink, however, he was destined not to have; and the bath which he indeed took was to be his last.

The mammoth had reached the little plateau, and was about to cross it and descend the slope to the water-hole, when another actor suddenly made his appearance upon the scene. Across the meadow from the right, and in the direction of the plateau, came thundering amid a cloud of dust a stocky low-built beast, with head held low, wicked eyes shining through the dust, the great horn upon his snout identifying him as the woolly rhinoceros—an animal which none of the boys had ever seen, for he was scarce in this region, particularly in summer, the thickness of his coat driving him northward during the warm season, to return again in winter to his old haunts. For what reason this individual rhino had remained so late, is unknown; but his behavior was so extraordinary as to make it seem probable that he was crazed by the heat.

Like the mammoth, the rhino was a vegetarian, feeding on grasses, the stems of plants, and the tender leaves and shoots

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of young trees, which his long flexible upper lip enabled him to pluck. In spite of his vicious appearance and his formidable horn, he was not a natural fighter, but would generally take to his heels at sight of an enemy, his muscular legs carrying him over the ground at an astonishing pace. For all these reasons, the conduct of the rhino on this occasion was entirely out of character.

Coming at full gallop, he pulled up at the edge of the plateau, where the mammoth stood facing him in apparent astonishment; and throwing up his head, uttered a piercing squeal of anger which carried in it a challenge to battle.

He was certainly an awkward and an ugly beast. His head was chunky, with a long snout, at the end of which the pointed sensitive upper lip kept quivering like the nose of a rabbit. His eyes were very small, and set in the sides of his head in such a way that looking straight ahead he got only an imperfect idea of the objects at which he was looking. His ears were disproportionately long, and stuck out ridiculously at right angles to the skull. As he faced the mammoth, he seemed at first glance a ludicrous sight; and still he created an impression of ferocity and power which made it certain that he would prove a formidable antagonist.

Pawing the ground impatiently with his foot, the rhinoceros waited; then, as the mammoth still made no move, he lowered once more his head, elevated his tail, and charged straight at his enormous foe; which seemed rooted to the spot in fear or indecision. With staring eyes the boys awaited the shock of this horned thunderbolt, which seemed destined to lacerate the flanks of the mammoth to ribbons, or to overthrow him, huge as he was, by mere force of impact. But just before the rhino reached him, the mammoth with incredible agility whirled in his tracks, and the rhino was carried by his mo-

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mentum several rods past his objective. Bracing his forefeet and sliding in order to check himself, he too whirled about and a second time launched his attack. Again the mammoth sidestepped, and his enemy passed him in his rush. But the third time, either the rhino was more agile or the mammoth too slow; for this time the great horn opened a red furrow in the hairy flank.

A new phase of the battle was now revealed; for with the feel of the wound, the mammoth, now thoroughly aroused, and infuriated by the pain, became the aggressor. He no longer tried merely to evade his enemy's attack, but took the offensive. The next rush he met halfway and head on. Throwing forward his immense bulk, and lowering his forehead, he caught the rhino under the fore-shoulder with one of his tusks, and hurled him aside so that he nearly rolled upon the ground. Recovering himself by a mighty effort, more cautiously now the rhino came on. He had recourse to all manner of tricks. He feinted and drew back; he circled about his foe and dashed in now from this quarter, now from that, his short sinewy legs working like pistons, and carrying him like steel springs which never tired. But always he met the huge massive front; always the great tusks, their reach longer than that of his horn, fended him off; and once they threw him with a shock that racked him through and through.

The heat now began to tell upon both combatants, and as though by mutual agreement they abandoned hostilities for a moment, and stood panting, with drooping heads and heaving flanks. And now the crisis came: the mammoth was off his guard through the exhaustion of battle; and in a second the rhino sprang forward, turned sharply in just as it seemed that he was about to pass his adversary, and buried his long horn to the root in the abdomen of his luckless foe.

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In agony the mammoth sank to his knees. And now the watching boys witnessed the extraordinary close of the extraordinary duel, which was in point of fact a victory for neither one of the contestants, but a draw; for although the mammoth tried in vain to free himself from the frightful weapon which pierced his vitals, the rhino was unable to escape from under the vast weight of his kneeling antagonist, which was gradually crushing him, head and shoulders, to the earth. Fruitlessly the rhino squealed and struggled; fruitlessly the mammoth sought bellowing to regain his feet. Both were alike helpless; slowly the great bulk sank lower and lower; feebler and feebler became the struggles of the crushed rhinoceros; and at last the mountain of flesh buried under it the redoubtable foe which had let out its life through the gaping wound now visible in its belly.

The rhino was dead; the mammoth was dying; but in the last agony the great beast heaved itself to its feet, lurched down along the trail until it stood deep in the pool, sprayed itself once through its trunk with water mixed with bloody foam; then sank slowly sidewise beneath the surface until it disappeared from sight. A few bubbles rose and broke; the ripples spread and died upon the shore. The mammoth, splendid even in defeat, had met death as became the gallant fighter that he was.

Upon the plateau, a shapeless heap of bones and hide, the great horn broken from the skull, lay all that remained of the aggressor in the battle of the monsters.

THE MIGHTY BRIGHT ONE

CHAPTER XV

THE MIGHTY BRIGHT ONE

THERE were some things about which, although he saw them every day, Ruig never ceased to wonder, for they were always just as strange and inexplicable. Chief among these was the sun.

There was so much about the sun which gave cause for wonder. For one thing, it was always on hand. Cloudy days might hide it, but it never failed to appear again; and no matter how long it might be out of sight, still it never got lost, and always showed up as good as ever, and apparently quite indifferent to the fact that the stormy weather had pretended to drown it out.

Then again, the sun was so very regular in its habits. It did not show itself at one point of the horizon this morning and at some other point tomorrow morning, but calmly rose in its accustomed place, marched across the sky and went down behind the hill on the other side as though it could not do anything else even if it tried. This fact gave you a feeling of security. You could always depend upon the sun, no matter what might happen anywhere else.

There were other things beside the sun, of course, which caused wonder. There was, for instance, the wind, which you could not see as you could the sun, but which had force in it, and could howl around the hut at night, or roar among the trees until you might believe that a hundred mammoths were trumpeting over there on the hillside. The wind did not begin nor end anywhere in particular. It came and went, rose and

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dropped, just as it happened, and without any system; and so, while Ruig wondered about the wind almost as much as he did about the sun, he got no comfort out of it, rather feeling a little afraid of it, because one could never tell just what it was going to do.

Then there were the thunder and lightning, which were the most scary of all, but not the most wonderful, for they seemed accidental almost, as though something had temporarily gone wrong in the sky; but because they did not come very often, nor last very long, Ruig did not give them very much attention after they were over.

Then, too, there was water, which had such a persistent habit of running down hill, and which you could not pick up in your fingers, although to look at it it seemed so solid. And of course there was fire, which had peculiarities of its own, and uses which you could not get along without. Since, however, Ruig had learned how to make fire for himself, he did not stand in awe of it as he once had; but the more he thought about the sun, the more wonderful that seemed. He could not understand it nor account for it in any way at all; and so after a while he began to think of it as though it were a person, instead of a thing—for it was so systematic, and apparently so intelligent that it seemed to make up its mind to act in a certain manner, and then go ahead and carry out its purpose, not because it was obliged to, but because it chose to do so.

It is true that Ruig thought about other things in the world of nature as having some kind of personality, or as taking place through the will of some person. The wind might be the breath of an invisible giant. The thunder and lightning might be this giant striking fire with his flint. Rain might be poured out of an immense jug up in the sky. When the trees along the edge of the woods bowed and rustled, it seemed as

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though they were people whispering to one another. The river and the spring, full of life and motion and mystery, might each have some kind of being who was responsible for them. But most of all Ruig had this feeling about the sun, because of its majesty, constancy, and power.

Those times of year when the sun was nearest, and its rays most direct, were the times of life and growth in the woods and fields. Without the sun there would be no spring nor summer, but everything would be hard and cold and barren. The sun was the maker of warmth and health and vigor. It was the source and fountain of them. It was the great friend and helper of all living things—most of all the friend and helper of man; and with this conviction rooted in his mind, Ruig's feeling toward the sun became one of awe and worship.

This feeling was different in kind from any which he had ever had before. Something like awe, it is true, he had felt in the presence of the great animals which he had seen; but these could be reached and conquered, in spite of their bulk and power. He had a feeling of immense admiration for the famous hunters of the tribe, with their huge frames and bulging muscles. Still he believed it only a question of time when he would be like them. But toward the sun, his feeling of reverence was based upon the conviction that here was a power and an intelligence, and a beneficence, which could be accounted for only through the supposition that they were qualities of a person, who was incalculably wiser, stronger, and more well-disposed than any other living creature. This person must be supreme. No matter what men might try to do to him, he could not be reached or controlled. He was so serene, so majestic, so silent in all his ways, that it made men appear very small and mean by comparison; for Ruig soon learned that these feelings of his were shared by all the other

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members of the tribe. To them the sun was a god—distant, mighty, inscrutable—who did not consult men nor stand in need of them, but went on about his business as though they did not exist. It was good to reverence him and seek his favor; for who could tell but he might some day become angry, and withdraw himself, leaving them in the cold and darkness of perpetual winter and night.

It had therefore become the custom of the tribe to go out in groups at early dawn, and just as the upper rim of the sun became visible above the eastern horizon, to lift their arms to him in supplication for the continuance of his favor. Then they would bow themselves humbly to the ground, all but the eldest, who would remain standing in the attitude of supplication, until the sun was fully in the sky; when they would rise and return to their huts, sure for a time at least of the goodwill of their god.

Ruig thought a good deal about this matter as he played around with the other boys, or as he lay awake at night upon his couch of skins; and he became certain in his own mind that he was surrounded by unseen forces which would never change. Why was it that you could not dig a hole in water? Why did water always insist upon running down hill? Why did a rock always fall to the ground at last, no matter how high and how far you might throw it? Something made these things *so*, and you could not get around it. Something made a boy grow taller and stronger as he played and exercised in the open air; something made him more and more skilful in casting throwing-stone or javelin, until it became like second nature to him, and no longer required special effort or thought.

These invisible forces were all about you; and there was this to be remembered—they were always *for* you, if you were on their side.

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To Ruig, this was a great idea, and it gave him a feeling of security and confidence such as he had never had before. To side *with* Nature, not to go against her, was the course which was both wise and safe. To go against Nature, was the sure road to all kinds of trouble and failure. The whole world was yours if you were *with* it, working in harmony with its laws; and in this thought was laid the first real foundation-stone in the character of the boy who was soon to become a man.

STRANGE VISITORS

CHAPTER XVI

STRANGE VISITORS

RUIG had been out one day with his bow and arrows, patterned after those which Huth had invented, and with which he had already attained a considerable degree of skill. It was dusk when he returned home, and he was surprised to find that his father was not in the hut. Ruig went around the neighborhood, thinking that he might be making some one a visit; but he discovered that all the men were away—and this was a most unusual thing. All that he could find out on making inquiries was, that some one had come into camp just at nightfall, and that the men had all gone off to see and talk with the stranger. Ruig found them gathered in a wide circle about a fire, before which squatted a miserable figure of a man, with a wild mop of tangled hair falling into his eyes, an emaciated body half-covered by a mangy wolf-skin, and bandy legs too short in proportion to the rest of him, while his arms on the contrary seemed abnormally long.

Ruig at once noticed that the shape of this man's head was very different from those of his own tribe, the forehead being low and the face narrow; while from under the matted hair the eyes peered out with the piercing look seen in those of wild animals—the whole aspect being something like that of a hyena, mean and cruel.

Some one was speaking to the stranger when Ruig joined the group about the fire, and evidently trying to find out whence he came, whether he was alone, or one of a party, how

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far he had come, and so forth; but while the man looked eagerly at his questioner and appeared to be doing his best to understand, he always shook his head, and at last made a gesture of despair, and turned away, as much as to say that it was no use.

An empty platter on the ground near by showed that food had been offered to the stranger; and now he seemed to wish to rest; for he rolled himself in his tattered wolf-skin and lay down with his feet toward the fire, becoming apparently plunged in sleep in a moment.

After seeing to it that there was plenty of wood with which to replenish the fire, for the night was chilly, and leaving an extra robe or two where the stranger could draw them over him if need be, the others withdrew and left him to himself, which was what he seemed to want; but that night guards were posted round the camp, something which within Ruig's remembrance had never been done before. The chiefs were evidently suspicious lest there might be a band of enemies lurking near by, having sent in one of their number as a spy, and they had no intention of being taken by surprise in a night attack. They had at the same time shown every courtesy and attention to the stranger, spy though he might be, for this was an invariable custom which admitted no exceptions.

To the younger members of the tribe, the advent of a visitor was a cause of a great deal of interest and excitement, for most of them had never seen a human being except those of their own village; and they were eager for daylight to come that they might study the newcomer at close quarters. Ruig, for one, scarcely slept at all, and as soon as it was light enough to see, he was out of the hut and away for the place where he had last seen the guest. Early as he was, however, the other had been earlier still, for he found the fire built up, but the

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man nowhere to be seen. Not knowing what else to do, Ruig sat down on the skin robes and waited; and in a little while the man appeared, coming from the direction of the river, and carrying two or three sizable fish, with his fingers hooked into their gills. In his left hand the stranger had a harpoon or spear, it was hard to tell which, until reaching the fire, he threw down his weapon, and paying no attention whatever to Ruig, drew a flint knife and commenced to clean his fish. Ruig meantime cast curious glances toward the harpoon, which was utterly unlike any in use in his own tribe. It seemed at first to be just a lance with a bone point; but the point beside being strongly barbed, had at one edge an eye, into which was tied the end of a thin cord, which, neatly coiled, lay on the ground near by. The purpose of this contrivance it was hard to guess, for one would naturally suppose that the cord would be fastened to the shaft of the harpoon, and not to the head or point. Meanwhile, the other gave him no help; but having roughly dressed his fish, he stuck them on sticks in front of the fire to cook, while he himself squatted on his heels and watched them without a word.

In this position, his disproportionately long arms rested on the ground; and Ruig experienced a strange sensation when he noticed that the hands lay with the palms up instead of down, as was natural to ordinary human beings.

When the fish were hardly more than warmed through, the stranger seized them from the fire, and wolfed them down without ceremony. Then he rubbed his stomach with both hands, with a comical expression of satisfaction on his wizened face; and for the first time cast at Ruig across the fire a glance which seemed almost friendly.

Before making any advances, however, Ruig studied the man more closely, for it was by this time light enough to see

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him pretty well. He saw that he had powerful arms and shoulders, while his legs seemed weak and undeveloped, the calves being thin and flat, as though their owner were unused to walking and running. Either this person was lazy, or else there was something the matter with him—Ruig could not make up his mind just what. He made bold to step around and lay a hand on the stranger's harpoon, all the time keeping his eyes on the other's face with an expression of inquiry, as though asking permission to examine the weapon. The other's glance went to the harpoon, then back to Ruig's face; when apparently satisfied with what he saw, he made an indifferent gesture with his hand, and turned away to get more wood for the fire.

Eagerly Ruig drew the harpoon toward him and closely examined it. It was well made, the shaft slender and straight, the bone head carefully shaped and smoothly finished. Ruig still failed to understand the eye with its cord; but as he handled the weapon he noticed that the head had an unusually long neck, the shaft fitting into it for something like eight inches; but it did not fit tightly, indeed did not seem intended to, for it slipped out very easily. Ruig fitted the two parts together and separated them a number of times without getting any light upon the problem, when suddenly it came to him. In harpooning a fish, the shaft always left the hand; if the fish was struck, sometimes the whole weapon was lost; but by means of this new contrivance, you threw the harpoon, but retained the end of the cord in your left hand. The shaft, slipping from the loose socket, would float on the water and could be recovered; while the fish, at the end of the cord which was fastened to the harpoon-head, could either be played until he was tired out, or hauled in at once hand over hand, as would usually be done if he was well struck. Ruig could see what

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a great idea this was, and wondered very much that none of his own tribe had ever thought of it; for this stranger was far beneath them in intelligence, as he certainly was in physique.

Having mended his fire, the other once more squatted down and idly watched Ruig in his study of the improved harpoon. Suddenly wild cries arose from the direction of the river, mingled with the note of some animal which Ruig had never heard before. It reminded him of the wolf, yet it was not a long-drawn howl, but shorter, sharper, more staccato. The guards came running from all directions; Ruig himself sprang to his feet; and as for the stranger, he was electrified. Bounding up, he darted toward the quarter whence the shouting came; and in a moment he reappeared in the midst of a group of three others, all clinging together and jabbering like a bunch of monkeys, while an animal somewhat resembling a wolf circled around them with yelps of excitement and joy.

Soon they came up to the fire, paying no attention to any one but themselves, and with no let-up in their chattering and gesticulation. The wondering guards, with an increasing crowd of spectators from the camp, attracted by the noise, stood looking on; but nobody could understand a word, nor make out what all the fuss was about.

Finally the newcomers squatted together at the fire, and the strange animal lay down near them, his jaws open and his tongue lolling out. Ruig looked him over with much interest. He had seen wolves, but this was not a wolf. The ears were shorter and the muzzle less pointed, nor did the eyes have the cruel and pitiless look seen in those of the wolf. And yet the animal resembled a wolf all the same.

Turning his attention to the men, Ruig saw that they had the same characteristics as the first stranger, heavy shoulders, thin and bandy legs, low foreheads and narrow skulls, the

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whole aspect being unlike anything Ruig had ever seen. Their hair, too, was matted and woolly, that of Ruig's tribe being fine and straight. The men had laid their weapons down by the fire, and these were more or less like those of the village, the peculiar harpoon being the only exception.

Presently Bram appeared, pushing through the crowd; and making his way to the fire, he too squatted down like the strangers, and listened for a while to their chatter. After a few moments he dropped a single word. Dead silence followed, while the visitors stared at him with open mouths: then they all began again worse than ever, and this time all talking at Bram instead of at one another. Bram listened with a grim smile; then rising to his feet and silencing them with a gesture, he spoke slowly and distinctly a few words. Excitedly one of the others replied. Again he questioned, and again they answered; until he finally seemed satisfied, and motioned them to be silent; and then turning to the spectators he told them what had been said.

These strangers, it seemed, lived a very long way to the north, how far none of them exactly knew; but it was very far. They dwelt in huts built upon piles driven into the bed of a lake, entered by ladders. They lived mostly by fishing, which they carried on from boats—logs hollowed out by means of fire and chisel so that they would float and hold one or two men. A few months ago, a violent epidemic had carried off over half of the settlement; and while they were in this enfeebled condition a neighboring tribe had attacked them and killed all but a handful, themselves among the number, who had escaped in their boats through the marshes. Finally, leaving their boats, they had made their way on foot for very many days, working always toward the south, and had become separated while hunting, the first arrival in the camp here

STRANGE VISITORS

being their head-man or chief, whom they had given up for lost until their dog had found and followed his trail. Bram further explained that living so much in boats their legs became thin and bent, while continual exercise with the paddles gave them their magnificent arms and shoulders. Long long ago, when but a small boy, he had lived for a few years among the lake-dwellers, and enough of their language had come back to him to enable him to interpret as he had done.

As for the dog, Bram said he was simply one of the wild dogs that run wolf-like in packs in the northern regions from which these strangers had come, caught when a puppy, and made a pet and companion, as you could never do with a wolf. From that moment Ruig made up his mind that he would never be satisfied until he had a dog of his own.

For several weeks the visitors remained in camp, eating and resting, and repairing their clothing and their weapons. They also showed the hunters an absolutely new thing—how to make and manage a boat. It took many weary days and some unlucky mistakes before the first log was properly hollowed out, trimmed so as to be stable, and launched on the river. It took still longer to learn how to sit in and paddle the rude craft, which was crank to a fearful degree. But perseverance finally won; and after that no day passed without one or more of the hunters going on harpooning expeditions in the wide reaches of the river below the camp.

One morning the strangers were gone. Their fire was cold, their hut empty, all that belonged to them carried off. The restless spirit of adventure was upon them; and with the unnecessary cunning of the savage, they had flitted in the night to parts unknown. But savages though they were, they left behind them three valuable ideas: the boat, the detachable harpoon-head, and the domestic pet. All three of these ideas

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were distinct contributions made to the tribe by men of much lower grade of intelligence than their own. But no one knows all there is to know, and there is no one from whom something is not to be learned.

PICTURES IN THE CAVE

CHAPTER XVII

PICTURES IN THE CAVE

AMONG the caves in the limestone cliff where the tribe in the winter months took refuge from the cold, there were some which were never used as dwellings, being too vast and extensive, for they would not have proved cosy and comfortable. Some of these ran back into the very heart of the cliff, with winding passages and unexpected turnings which sometimes dropped down into unknown depths, and made it exceedingly dangerous to traverse them unless one were familiar with the ground, or else very careful to pick his way by the dim light of the oil lamp, in its cup made of reindeer horn. These caverns widened at times into huge halls, with a roof so high as to be almost out of sight, though up above there could be seen many sparkling points of light shining like stars. These were bits of quartz imbedded in the limestone. In some of the rooms where water had seeped through the roof, there were long pendants resembling stone icicles, formed by the slow hardening of the water, so impregnated with lime that it might almost be called liquid stone. On the floor of the cave would be other formations reaching up toward those which hung from the roof; these were made by the drippings from above, hardening upon the ground; and sometimes the two would meet, making a sort of stone pillar that looked as though it were built for the purpose of holding up the roof.

All this was, of course, most interesting to the children, for like all boys and girls they were full of curiosity and love

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of adventure; but while they had some of them been taken by the older people part way into these caverns, they had been forbidden to go in alone, as there was not only danger of accident from a mis-step in the winding passages, but it was also possible to get lost in the branching galleries, some of which had never been thoroughly explored.

There was one enormous room, however, into which they were permitted to go, for it was not very far in, and had no holes nor unexpected inequalities in the floor. The walls of this room were exceedingly flat and smooth, as was also the ceiling, which in this cave was not very lofty, not more than ten or twelve feet above the floor.

The place was circular in shape, widening out rather suddenly from the narrow gallery by which it was approached; and walls and ceiling alike were nearly covered with the most lifelike pictures of animals, drawn there by the artists of the tribe. Here was a herd of reindeer, or a drove of wild cattle. Here was the stately form of the giant elk. In another place could be seen the lumbering figure of the cave-bear; in another, were represented two woolly mammoths, forehead to forehead, engaged in deadly combat. One could distinguish several different kinds of horses; and the ibex and the chamois were also to be seen.

Some of these pictures were in outline merely, the form being traced in the soft limestone by a sharp graver of flint, and then filled in with black. Some were shaded to represent the fur or the hair, the manes of the horses and the heavy overcoat of the rhinoceros; but many of the drawings were not only outlined and shaded, but colored as well, in red, yellow, black and white; and this gave them a very life-like appearance, as these were the true colors of their coat or hide.

Ruig had a natural taste for drawing and carving, which

PICTURES IN THE CAVE

had been encouraged in him by old Graum, himself a notable artist, as has been seen; and from him Ruig had gained a good many useful ideas, and had received many lessons in the ornamentation of his weapons by means of etching and carving. Indeed some measure of this artistic gift must have been present in the entire tribe, for there was not in any hut an article of bone or horn which was not covered with some kind of pattern or design, figures of animals being the favorite, with now and then that of one of the larger birds.

On the cave-walls, however, there was room for a wider range of art; for here there could be pictured the life-size form of even the largest beast. It was wonderful that they were drawn with such fidelity to nature; they showed tremendous spirit and life; and when it is remembered that they were not copied, but drawn from memory, they seemed more wonderful still. The artists had, of course, seen the living animals many times; but it is one thing to copy, and another and much more difficult thing to see with the mind's eye, and in the correct proportion and form. Yet so realistic were these cave-pictures that Ruig, often as he had seen them, never failed to be startled when the dim light of the oil-lamp, suddenly falling upon the figure of a saber-tooth or of a mammoth, made him stand out from the darkness as though alive.

Some of these drawings must have been made a very long while before Ruig's time, as there were some animals depicted which none of the hunters had ever seen in this vicinity. Perhaps they had all been killed off, or it may be they had migrated toward the north or the south on account of changes in the climate; at any rate they were not here now, and had not been within the memory of living man.

It so happened that Bram, whom Ruig had found one day melting the metal out of a bit of rock in his fire, and who had

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then talked with him so interestingly about the future of the tribe, was one of the best of all the artists, and the one most in demand for cave-drawings. These drawings had a certain purpose, and were not made merely to satisfy an artistic instinct. There was about them an element of superstition, for one thing. For example, when a hunter was planning an expedition against a certain animal which was likely to prove dangerous, he would send for the artist, and engage him to draw upon the cave-wall a picture of this animal, which supposedly would bring him success in his hunting, or would ward off possible danger. On some portions of the wall were very many prints of human hands, which had been dipped in paint and then laid flat upon the rock. These were of all shapes and sizes; but all were in one respect alike; one or more of the fingers were missing—chopped off perhaps as part of some religious rite; and the imprint of the mutilated hand upon the wall had some peculiar significance the nature of which Ruig did not know; nor had any of the men ever been willing to tell him. Perhaps he would know when he became of age, and was initiated into full membership in the tribe.

As a rule, the cave-drawings were made in secret, no one being allowed to be present while the artists were at work. Two persons, however, were required, as one of them must hold the oil-lamp to light the other as he made his drawing, moving the lamp from place to place in order that its dim flicker might fall upon the necessary spot. Bram had allowed Ruig to accompany him on one or two occasions, for he seemed to have taken a fancy to him, and always liked to have him around. The two would go into the cave about nightfall, laden with the proper tools, and having selected his location, Bram would lay out his materials upon the floor, and proceed in a systematic manner to do his work.

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The outfit consisted of the lamp, made of a hollow section of reindeer horn, from which the marrow had been scraped out. This held about half a pint of oil, with a wick of woven grass. It yielded a miserable and uncertain light, but it was the best that was to be had.

Several containers, also of reindeer horn, held the pigments—black from the smoke of the lamp, the yellow and red from ochre mixed with oil; and the white from a sort of greasy clay dug along the river-bank. White was sparingly used, merely to bring out the high lights. Black was mostly for the outlines, or for shading. Red and yellow were the chief colors used in filling in.

Being ready for work, while Ruig held the light aloft, Bram would take a piece of hard white clay, and standing off at arm's length from the wall, would sketch in a few bold sweeping strokes the main outline of his picture—a chamois, a wild ox, or whatever it might be. Next, more carefully, he put in the details: horns, eyes, hoofs and ears. This having been done to his satisfaction, and all unnecessary marks erased, Bram laid down his crayon, took in hand his flint chisel and stone mallet, and following the outlines which he had drawn, cut them cleanly into the limestone wall. He next blew all dust from the cutting, and rubbed into it with his fingers some of the thick lamp-black from one of his containers, until the entire outline was filled, smears being wiped away with a bunch of dry grass. Now the figure of the animal stood out against the grayish background of the rock with startling distinctness, making a very striking effect.

All this would take several hours, as the chiseling was of necessity slow work, and had to be carefully done. But Ruig never grew tired of watching, although his arm often became stiff with holding up the lamp and moving it back and forth so

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that Bram could see. But when the outlining was completed, and Bram began to lay on the colors, yellow and red for the coats of the animals, a touch of red for nostrils and eyes, and a little white on the point of shoulder and hip, Ruig's delight knew no bounds. He was conscious of having assisted at an artistic performance which partook also of religious significance; and looked forward to the day when as a grown man he would no longer be an assistant merely, but a principal performer. He felt that he had it in him to draw with all Bram's skill the figures of the various animals as he saw them with the eye of his mind; and determined to practice at every possible opportunity, in order to perfect himself in the art.

There was one day when for some reason or other Bram relaxed his rule of secrecy, and himself invited the children to watch him make a drawing upon the walls of a cave where, just within the entrance, where daylight fell upon it, was a broad flat space just right for a picture. And here, while the boys and girls stood, squatted and lay all about him, he made a spirited picture of a pair of wild cattle standing side by side, so full of life that they seemed ready to spring out of the rock into the open.

When the chiefs learned what he had done, they reprimanded Bram, and banished him to his cave for a week; but the drawing was left where it was; and every time that Ruig passed the spot, he drew from it fresh inspiration for his future work.

GROWING UP

CHAPTER XVIII

GROWING UP

SI X summers and winters had passed since Ruig up in his tree had caught his first sight of big game, and had watched in fascination the progress of the mammoth along his path through the woods. He no longer played with a boy's javelin, fit only for rabbits and quail; but could balance and cast a real spear. His shoulders had grown broad, his chest was deep and roomy, his arms and legs had taken on the lines of full development, and it was plainly to be seen that Ruig was destined to become a large man. Yet for all his increasing size and weight, he retained the narrow waist of the runner, seemingly out of proportion to the wide spread of his shoulders.

The use of the bow and arrow, since their first demonstration by Huth at the time of the field-day, had become universal among the hunters of the tribe. Not a man of them but could bring down any fair-sized game at fifty paces; and Ruig had grown especially expert in the handling of this weapon. He liked the javelin well enough, and there was something rather fascinating in the feel of the light stone axe, as you balanced and threw it whirling, to turn at the last moment and dart at the mark edge on. But best of all Ruig loved the bow. He loved to set the stout ash against his foot and bend it until the loop in the cord snapped into its notch, and the great arc with its suggestion of power fitted snugly in his palm. He loved to place the arrow to the string, and left arm at full stretch, right hand drawing the tense cord back until it touched

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his breast, then to release it and hear the hum of the string and the swish of the feathered arrow in its swift flight through the air. Muscular arm and steady nerve, clear eye and sound judgment, were all requisites of the accomplished Bowman; and these Ruig possessed in full measure.

But it was not only in point of physical size and strength that Ruig was growing up; his mind had been developing as well. He had learned much by listening to the conversation of older people who had had much experience of life, as well as by asking questions about things which he did not understand. He had always been a favorite with the men, and his friendship with old Graum, and later on with Bram, had matured his thinking powers earlier than is the case with most boys. Ruig was just on the hither side of manhood. A few days more, and he would cross the line, and be received as a full member into the ranks of the tribe, entitled to bear his part in its councils, and to assume his share of its privileges and its responsibilities.

The days when these initiations took place were always looked forward to with eager anticipation by the members of the tribe in general, for they signified the filling up of the ranks of providers and defenders, which were continually being thinned through death and old age. To the young man about to be initiated, it was not only a momentous day, but a solemn one; for henceforth much would be expected of him which had never been expected before. Failures and mistakes would no longer be laughed at and condoned, but seriously noted, and if need be, punished, for the entire tribe might be made to suffer through the cowardice or heedlessness of a single member; and in time of emergency or danger there was no room for weaklings.

As the time drew near, therefore, for Ruig to be received

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into tribal membership, he did a great deal of thinking, often going away by himself into the woods, or paddling his boat to some remote backwater of the river, where undisturbed he might try to realize what lay before him. The very anticipation seemed to make him older; for it gave him a soberer view of many things which he had always taken for granted, and caused him to especially appreciate the essential qualities of courage and steadfastness at their true value.

At dawn of the morning when the initiation ceremonies were to take place, the hollow booming of the medicine-man's drum, seeming to come from beneath the ground, reminded the tribe of the special character of the day. Every one turned out early, and hastened to the center of the camp, where there was a wide level space covered with thick short grass. At one side, in an interested, shifting crowd, were assembled the women and girls; while upon the grassy area itself gathered the men, who alone took part in the ceremonies, the others being accorded the rôle of spectators only.

The men took their places upon three sides of a square. At the back were the elders, no longer able to hunt or travel, but still sage in counsel, and always held in great respect because of their experience. On two other sides, opposite one another, sat in numbers equally divided the strong active men, hunters and scouts; the fourth side was open.

Thus assembled, the tribe maintained complete silence, all eyes being bent upon the ground as though in profound meditation. After several long minutes there could again be heard, muffled and far away, the faint reverberation of the sorcerer's drum. Eight times it throbbed, and was still. As the last stroke died mutteringly away, there rose to his feet from among the ranks of the elders an aged man. Supported upon either side by a strong-armed hunter, he tremblingly

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advanced to the center of the square, and thrust into the soft sod a small dead tree, a few withered leaves clinging to its twigs, and the dried bark hanging in ragged patches upon its stem. Breaking with his gnarled fingers the dead branches, so that hanging helplessly down they gave the finishing touches to what now seemed the perfect symbol of age and decay, he tottered back to his place, and sank again to his seat upon the ground.

Another period of silence followed, the eyes of the men turned no longer now, as before, toward the ground, but upon the dry and lifeless tree standing in the middle of the square.

Again the sorcerer's drum sent forth its foreboding note, eight times repeated. When the last faint echo died, there sprang lightly forth from among the hunters a youth in his early twenties, a model of muscular beauty and strength. Striding off a few rods to a thicket of young maples, he severed at the root, with a vigorous stroke of his keen flint hatchet, a splendid sapling, which he sharpened at its base to a point. Throwing it over his shoulder, he returned to the square, and advancing to the spot where stood the dried and ragged tree set up by the aged hunter, he in turn thrust his sapling firmly into the ground, so that it seemed growing there. This done, he returned to his place in the ranks.

For a time there was absolute silence once more, while the gaze of all was riveted upon the two trees, the living and the dead, the withered and the fresh, exhibiting in their contrast the mystery of the vital force of Nature, which, drawing life out of the ground to nourish the tiny seedling, pours into it force and energy so that it swells and grows, the sap coursing through its veins until it has become a tree, perfect after its kind. But years pass, and now Nature is through with her creation; the sap slows and dwindle, receding farther and

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farther from the tips of the twigs, back and downward until all vitality is gone, and nothing is left but a dead trunk, which in time will crumble into powder, and mingle again with the earth out of which it came.

In the same way men come and go; and the planting of these two trees was meant to symbolize the continual replacing by young and vigorous life of the other lives which are fading to decay.

As the dull moan of the great drum died away for the third time, Ruig stepped out from the throng of spectators, and advanced to the center of the square. He made a fine picture as he stood there, head erect, muscular arms hanging slightly flexed at his sides, his bronzed body supported by the round pillars of his fine legs, his eyes level and fearless as he gazed into the face of the headman of the tribe, who now stepped forth to meet him, while the three ranks of men rose to their feet and stood silently in place.

The chief stepped up to Ruig, unfastened the strap by which his skin garment was held up over the shoulder, and then belted the loosened robe snugly about the waist, leaving the body and arms free. This was the sign that Ruig was now in full hunter's trim, fit for the trail or the fight.

Next, in the loop at the left side of Ruig's belt the chief thrust the handle of a light flint axe; in the belt itself he stuck half a dozen arrows. In one of Ruig's hands he placed an unstrung bow; in the other a heavy spear. Then, receiving from an attendant the skin of a wolf, the chief laid this for a moment upon Ruig's naked shoulder. Removing this, he replaced it with the pelt of a fox; and this again with the striped hide of a tiger. The candidate was now supposed to be endowed with the speed, cunning, and strength of the three animals whose skins had touched him.

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The chief now withdrew to the ranks, leaving Ruig alone in the center of the square. Once more faintly sounded the distant drum; as it ceased, Ruig advanced to the open side of the square, shook his spear above his head, and with a mighty throw hurled it fifty yards to quiver in the side of a lone tree which stood in the meadow below. Placing the end of the bow against his foot, he bent and strung it; drew three arrows from his belt; and fitting them in quick succession to the string, shot them one after the other in a high curve into the air, so swiftly that the third had left the string before the first had fallen to the ground. Lastly, drawing from his belt the little axe, he balanced it for a moment at the height of his shoulder, then cast it toward the distant tree in which his spear still quivered. Whirling with the rapidity of light, so that the eye could scarcely follow it, the axe darted at the tree, and sank to the very helve in its trunk.

The ritual was over. The candidate had been duly received into tribal membership, and was now accepted as a man, a hunter, and a warrior, upon equal terms with them all. Boyhood lay behind him forever.

That night Ruig watched alone with his weapons at the edge of the forest under the stars. At dawn, he plunged naked into the river, made obeisance to the sun-god, just appearing over the mountain-rim; and then made his way back to the camp, to take up life in its new phase of responsibility; and with mingled feelings of regret and joy.

THE GREAT TESTING

CHAPTER XIX

THE GREAT TESTING

RUIG had been on a hunting trip up the river, and having shot a number of ducks with his bow and arrows, was about to turn toward home, when his foot became entangled in something in the long grass at the edge of the stream.

He thought at first that it was a trailer from a blackberry vine, but when he tried to kick loose he found that he could not do so. Stooping down in order to free his ankles, his hand encountered a long thin line of twisted sinew, which he at once judged to belong to a harpoon. Wondering a little at finding such a thing here, the river at this point being shallow and swift, so that there were no pools where fish could lie, he began to pull in the line, and at last drew toward him through the grass the harpoon-head to which it was attached. No sooner had he glanced at this than he threw himself flat on his face, and wormed his way along through the grass until he was several rods away from his original position, and under cover of some bushes. Only then did he venture to raise his head and look cautiously around. With an arrow ready on the string, as though expecting an attack, he studied the landscape sharply in all directions; but at last, seeing nothing unusual, he laid aside his bow, and picking up the harpoon-head which had aroused his suspicions, he carefully examined it.

He found this harpoon-head to be totally different in pattern from any which were made by his own tribe, both in its

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general form, and in the shape of the eye through which the line was run; and it was this difference which at first glance had brought to his mind a sense of danger. A man, to whom this harpoon belonged, had been here not long ago, for the line was new, and the ivory head of the weapon was clean and bright. And if one man was near, perhaps other men, many men, might be in hiding, preparing an attack upon his village and its people. Ruig felt that he must find out something about this stranger who owned the harpoon before he returned to camp; for while he did not really have much fear of a hostile attack, he nevertheless cherished that instinctive resentment against intruders which every hunter feels when his own familiar territory is in danger of infringement.

After waiting for half an hour, then feeling pretty sure that there was no one in the immediate vicinity, Ruig ventured out of his cover, and scouted up and down the river bank for any signs in the soft earth which might give him information. Not until he had advanced a mile upstream did he find anything; when all at once he discovered numerous human footprints in the mud, and strange to say, numerous tracks of wolves as well. His first thought was that wolves had pursued these unknown men, who had sought to escape by swimming; but on second thought he decided against this, for it was a season when wolves would not be so bold as to attack a band of men, since there was plenty of game about; and besides, he changed his mind about the wolves altogether, for on examination he found that the prints were of a different character from those left by the pads of the wolf. They resembled them indeed, but the toes were set at a different angle with the palm of the foot. All of a sudden Ruig recalled the dog which had accompanied the four savages who had come into camp several years ago. Eagerly he scanned the signs in the

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mud at the river's edge. There must be many dogs, how many he could not tell; but enough at least to form a considerable pack; and that would mean a considerable company of men. Closely scanning the horizon, he discerned against some woods in the distance a faint bluish tinge of smoke; and was sure that there in the woods must be the camp of the strangers.

Ruig wet his finger and held it up. The faint air that was stirring was blowing away from him and toward the woods. He was therefore to windward of the enemy, if enemy it was; and was in some danger of discovery unless he exercised unusual care.

After thinking awhile, Ruig made up his mind that it would be best for him to return to camp, as night was drawing on, and report to the chiefs what he had discovered. It would be a feather in his cap, for it would be the first thing of any importance which he had done since his initiation into the tribe; and he was burning to distinguish himself in some way. That this discovery was a thing of importance, was beyond question; for the presence in the neighborhood of a number of unknown men, accompanied by a pack of dogs, was at any rate not to be taken lightly, while it might mean something very serious indeed.

Accordingly Ruig made his way home as quickly as he could, and told Narg, whom he met on the outskirts of the camp, what he had seen. Later in the evening, a council was called to discuss the situation; and it was decided that Narg, who was a famous tracker, should accompany Ruig next day to the place where he had seen the smoke, and try to get near enough to the strangers' camp to estimate the number of men and dogs it contained. They were also to form an idea if they could of the character of the camp itself—whether the men were hunters merely, or outfitted for a warlike purpose.

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Narg and Ruig, therefore, on the morning of the following day, fetched a wide circle away from the river, and keeping always to leeward, managed at last to reach the woods in which the camp was believed to be hidden. Making their way cautiously through the trees and underbrush, they reached the edge of a gully or ravine, out of which at some little distance rose the sound of voices, the barking of dogs, and all the various noises of camp life. Creeping along the brink of the gully toward the sounds, they parted the bushes at the edge of the bank, and looked down upon a strange scene.

Below them was a rude settlement of bark huts, with fires smoking here and there; but the gaze of Narg and Ruig became focussed at once upon the men who formed the camp population. They seemed of the same type as the lake-dwellers who had come into their own village some years ago; but these men had an indescribably fierce and cruel aspect. They were about fifty in number, and were all squatting around in a circle, evidently debating some question of great importance, while in various places round about lounged a couple of score of huge dogs, high in the shoulder, thin in the flank, as tall as a pony, with lolling tongues and wolfish eyes, and long fangs which now and then snapped viciously together as they caught at a troublesome fly. These dogs were manifestly under discipline, however; for when one of them so far forgot himself as to intrude upon the circle of the council, a harsh word of command would always send him quickly back among the trees.

The two scouts could understand nothing of the language spoken by the strangers, and they wished that Bram, with his knowledge of many tongues, had come with them. Two or three words, however, which were repeated many times, and always with great emphasis, they memorized, that they might

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ask Bram when they reached home again if he knew what they meant. The council now broke up, with much excited chatter, and a great deal of extravagant gesturing and pointing; and the men then scattered about the camp, each one gathering his weapons and looking them carefully over, with the evident purpose of putting them into the best condition for immediate use.

These weapons consisted of spears, javelins, axes, clubs, and flint knives of a peculiarly wicked pattern; but there were no bows and arrows, and Narg and Ruig noted this with much satisfaction, for in case of an encounter their own men, trained in the use of this weapon, would possess a very distinct advantage.

By this time the breeze had died away, and the two scouts, fearing lest it shift to another quarter and so bring their scent to the keen-nosed dogs, noiselessly retreated, and hastened back to their own camp, where they reported what they had seen; and the matter was discussed that evening by the hunters and elders in full council.

At the council, three different lines of action were recommended by the speakers. First, that a surprise attack be made without delay upon the camp of the strangers for the purpose of wiping them out. Second, that messengers be sent to treat with them, and arrange conditions of peace; and third, that no such move of any kind be made, but that preparations for defense be completed, so that in case of an attack they might not be caught unprepared; that scouts be out night and day to guard against surprise; and that the business of life go on as usual until something happened to interrupt it.

After much debate, the third plan prevailed. The men encamped up the river might not be hostile after all, in which case an unprovoked attack might lead to endless complications

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in the future. On the other hand, to send out messengers with proposals for a treaty would not only assume that the purpose of the others was unfriendly, which was not yet certain, but would be in itself a confession of weakness on their own part. As for the third plan, it seemed best in every way, and more especially because the men of the tribe were not primarily warriors, but hunters, whose quarrels were with animals, not with men, so that warfare was new to them. It was beyond a doubt, nevertheless, that they would defend their hunting-grounds with stubbornness and courage.

The choice of a leader was now discussed; and it was agreed that Ruig's father, as one of the most experienced among the chiefs, should be in full charge of the plans for the defense of the camp, with power to select his own assistants; and then, after posting sentries for the night, the council adjourned.

Several days passed with no sign on the part of the newcomers, although it was known that they still maintained their camp up the river, where the smoke of their fires was plainly to be seen. Meanwhile the hunters busied themselves in making ready their weapons, and in talking over the best methods of meeting an attack in case one were actually made, which some of them were inclined to doubt.

The village was located several hundred yards back from the river, with the limestone cliffs in which the caves were situated at its rear. Up river, on the right as one faced it, was a swamp of considerable extent, running from the base of the cliff almost to the river, from which it was separated by a narrow strip of firm ground a few yards wide along the bank. A fringe of bushes lined the edge of the stream. To the left, the ground was open and level as far as one could see.

Having a plan of defense in mind, Ruig's father looked

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over the ground; and although he, like the others, had had no experience in battle, he saw at once that the lay of the land was most favorable for the defenders. The invaders must approach from up river. The cliffs were too lofty and too steep to permit an attack from that quarter, and extended for miles, making an attempt to skirt them very improbable. On the right, the camp was protected by the swamp. The river was a barrier in front. It was altogether likely that the enemy if he came would proceed along the narrow strip of firm ground next the stream until clear of the swamp, and would then face to the left and spread out for the attack.

This, as events proved, was exactly what happened. Early one morning the scouts came in and reported that the camp up river was abandoned, and the entire body of strangers on the move down the course of the stream. Screened as they were by the thick growth of bushes upon the bank, nothing more than this could be said; but this was enough, for it was plain that an attack must be looked for at any moment. The hunters, therefore, to each of whom his position had been already assigned, went to their stations. The women and children were sent back for safety to the caves. Ruig's father with a selected group of men was at the center of the defensive line. Narg had command at the right, near the swamp; while Bram, who for all his morose disposition and general unpopularity was a mighty hunter, and respected by all for his shrewdness, held the open side on the left.

As there was no cover of which advantage might be taken, the men lay prone on the ground, so as to afford as small a target as possible for hostile missiles; with bows strung and arrows ready, spears and axes close at hand, they awaited, with no little excitement, the development of the expected attack.

This came more suddenly than they had guessed; for as

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they eagerly scanned the distant bushes along the river bank, behind which dark forms could here and there be dimly seen flitting from cover to cover, all at once the air was split by a frightful yelling; and a cloud of moving bodies burst into the open and rushed headlong upon them. Brandishing spears and clubs, their long wild hair streaming back from their convulsed faces, they came at speed across the flat, preceded by a hail of harpoons, most of which fortunately fell short; but strange and fearful to see—and striking panic to more than one heart among the defenders—among the savage men, and along with them, bounded two score huge and savage hounds, of an aspect more horrid than that of the men, with open jaws and gleaming eyes, yet running silently, as though sure of accomplishing their deadly purpose.

For a moment the defenders were at a loss; but at once firm and clear rang out the command of the leader: “Arrows! at the dogs!” As one man the hunters sprang to their feet; the great bows twanged; the white arrows flew. Down went half a dozen hounds as though struck by lightning. A second volley, and a dozen more were accounted for. There was no time for a third volley, for now the enemy were right upon them; and throwing away their bows and seizing axe and spear, the hunters joined hand to hand in the fierce *meleé* that followed. Thrust and parry, feint and recovery, wheel and sidestep, then closing in deadly grapple, with naked hands which felt for throat and eyeball, or flint knife sent home between the ribs, the battle swayed hither and thither with no apparent gain for either side.

Man for man, the newcomers were no match physically for the men of the tribe; yet so determined was their onslaught, and so disconcerting the appearance of the dogs, which wheeled snapping and growling among the fighting

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groups, sinking their fangs in the flesh of arm or leg, or springing upon the breast of an opponent to bear him by sheer weight to the ground, that for a moment or two the issue seemed in doubt. Huth's two arrows had spitted a brace of the beasts as they came on. Narg brained a couple with his axe. A third launched itself at his throat as his arm swung wide for a blow; but in midair as it sprang he kicked it in the belly, and as it rolled howling in the dust he pinned it with a javelin, and turned again to meet two savages who menaced him from either side. Dropping his weapon, Narg seized each by the throat with his immense hands, and dashing their skulls together with fearful force, he cracked them like eggshells, and threw the writhing bodies upon the ground.

Ruig, fighting near the center, after discharging his two arrows, found no immediate opponent. Alert and ready, he watched with admiration the coolness of his father, and the dexterity with which he handled axe and spear. Two men ran at him at once. Feinting at one of them with his spear, at the same moment he dashed his axe in the face of the second, splitting it like a ripe apple. As the other cunningly ducked and ran under his guard, he gripped the unfortunate savage with both hands, bent him over his powerful knee and broke his spine. Springing aside as a third enemy thrust at him with a spear, letting the attacker over-reach himself, before he could recover Ruig sank a flint knife between his shoulders.

The battle was now a wild confusion of whirling weapons and leaping bodies, half-seen through clouds of dust, amid which dashed to and fro the deadly hounds. But by degrees the superior physique and higher morale of the defenders began to prevail. One by one the enemy broke out of the press, seeking escape; figures could be seen fleeing in all directions for cover. But Bram and his detachment cut them

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off from the open ground on the left; the cliff prevented all hope at the rear; before them lay the river; and at the right the swamp, where Huth's company of archers lay grimly in wait.

Some of the fugitives threw themselves into the river to swim to the opposite bank, but the deadly arrows overtook them. Others tried to thread the morass, leaping from tussock to tussock until a mis-step sent them to a horrible death by suffocation in the slimy depths. At last only the few surviving dogs remained, surrounded by a narrowing circle of hunters, who met their savage rushes with axe and spear until the last brute went down, dangerous even in death.

Leaning upon their weapons, the victors surveyed the field. Of their own number, four only had been killed, but eight had received serious wounds, and not one but had a scratch from a javelin, or the marks of a hound's teeth. Of the enemy, barely a dozen had made good their escape by the path along the river-bank.

Ruig stood a little apart, his heart beating with excitement and pride. He had justified his right to be considered a full-fledged member of the tribe. As a scout and as a fighter, he had borne himself like a man; and when the eyes of his father sought him out, and rested upon him in grave approval, he felt that life was very good indeed.

